A MAN WITHOUT A NAME.

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EDITED BY THE

DOWAGER COUNTESS OF MORLEY.

He that lacks time to mourn, lacks time to mend.
Eternity mourns that. 'Tis an ill cure
For life's worst ills, to have no time to feel them.
TAYLOR'S *Van Artevelde.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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CHAPTER I.

Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
No life that breathes with human breath,
Has ever truly longed for death.

'Tis life whereof our nerves are scant,
Oh, life, not death, for which we pant,
More life and fuller that we want.

TENNYSON.

EDWARD arrived at Liverpool the day after his sad farewell visit to Mary.

He found that the vessel in which he was to embark for the Cape, sailed immediately, and that little time was left to make his few necessary preparations for the voyage. He was on board, and losing sight of England before he recovered from the bewildered state into which he had fallen.

As long as anything remained to be done, he gladly sought relief in action, and was surprised at the attention he was able to give to trifling details, while holding down the feelings that a moment's leisure would have allowed to spring up stronger than ever. His heart was, as it were, numbed by the force put upon it, and he dreaded the moment when he should begin to feel again.

The moment came, however, and well might he dread it. There in that narrow ship, with nothing to draw him from himself, no occupation, no interest, no companion; nothing but the boundless sky above, the boundless sea around him, what could he do but think and feel until his brain seemed to grow dizzy with agony. He paced the silent deck night after night, living through the last scenes of his life again, comparing what might have been, with what must be, until there rose to his mind the question, the most fatal question that presumptuous

man can ask, "What have I done to deserve this?"

There were moments in those dark hours when he rebelled fiercely against his destiny. At one time he would repent that he had not committed the fatal papers to the flames, buried the secret in his own bosom, and spared himself and Mary a life-long misery, nay, he even convinced himself that whatever concealment might have cost him, it was his duty to have acted thus for her sake; at another time he would lament that he had not engaged her to fly with him to some distant land, where happy in themselves, they might have braved all outward circumstances. Now he would persuade himself that he was the sport of some vain delusion, and picture a triumphant return to his native land, all clouds cleared away, and bright sunshine on every face. Again sinking from such wild flights, spent by the storm raging within him, worn by the fever of despair, he would gaze into the depths

that he glided so swiftly over, and long to seek peace for his aching heart and throbbing head, beneath the cool, clear, peaceful waves.

One night Edward was even more hopeless and despairing than usual, the longing to cease from life's struggle grew stronger and stronger as he indulged it.

There is a state of mind and a dangerous one, in which the thought of some great crime presents itself, and instead of being spurned with horror, is dwelt upon with idle complacency, the fancy being allowed to linger around the temptations that it affords. With fatal confidence in our own strength, we quiet conscience by the assurance that there is no necessary connexion between imagination and action, and that we are no nearer sin for having thought of it.

In such a mood was Edward.

As he stood leaning over the vessel's side, he suffered the mysterious promptings of nature to gain over him an unrestrained

command. Thirst for rest—rest from thought and feeling—was blended with the strange power of attraction which many experience when gazing long and fixedly into clear deep water, or when watching the smooth and resistless force with which a strong rapid glides onward to its leap.

All power of reflection, all consciousness even of suffering seemed lost in the one wild thought — a plunge and all will be over—a moment and I shall find peace beneath those heaving waters. A sudden movement of the ship, as she changed her course, roused Edward from his stupor, and he shuddered as he recognized the thought that he had suffered himself to entertain.

The revulsion of feeling that followed was of use, in causing him to look with alarm upon the state of mind into which he was gradually falling. This was his first sorrow. Hitherto annoyance, mortification, disappointment, or suspense, had been his severest trials, and the fault of his character

was that he suffered these to affect him too keenly. The depths of his soul had never been stirred; here all was new to him, and he knew not where to turn for strength or consolation. He was tempted rather to exclaim, "Why am I thus afflicted," than to bow his head and say, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good."

It must be said, as some excuse for him, that in misfortunes of the kind under which he was suffering, the mind is apt to dwell upon the immediate agent, man, and to resent the injury as from his hand, rather than to ascend to the First Cause, and acknowledge in the human instrument, the will of the Almighty. It is the same feeling that leads so many to acquiesce with readier submission in the loss of friends by sickness, than in their death by accident or by violence.

Although religiously brought up, imbued with strict moral principles, and full of high and noble feelings, Edward had yet to

make the discovery which all have to make for themselves—that the object of our life on earth is not to enjoy the present, but to fit ourselves for future happiness. This is taught, commented on, agreed to, as the commonest and most undoubted of truths, and yet when affliction causes it first to be felt, it is as if a new light had broken in upon the soul.

Edward at this moment, thought more of his own cowardice in shrinking from what he had to bear, than of his guilt in wishing the life ended in which so much remained for him to do. He sought to harden himself against misfortune, to endure stoically whatever might be his lot, and to defy any combination of misery to crush him. This mood lasted for some days, but the monotony of sea-life afforded nothing to keep up an unnatural state of exaltation, and besides, he could not defend himself from an intuitive conviction that there was something unsound in his philosophy. His thoughts,

which constantly recurred to Mary, began to dwell much upon the question, how she bore her share of their common sorrow, and as he tried to imagine her frame of mind, he became more aware of the errors of his own. He remembered her words with her parting gift, and he felt sure that from the Bible alone would she seek to derive support and comfort; with this feeling he sat down to the study of the sacred volume. He was perhaps better read in the Bible than many young men of his age, but he had never had recourse to its pages with his present views, and he hardly knew where to turn or what to seek; it was some time before he found himself profiting as he had hoped, by his studies. Meanwhile he thought much and deeply upon his past life; he could not but acknowledge that hitherto he had lived for enjoyment alone, innocent enjoyment it was true, but still earthly enjoyment; what should he live for now?

Many nights did he pace up and down the deck, communing with his own soul, and severe was the struggle with his rebellious nature, before the answer stood out clearly to his mental vision. He came forth from the ordeal an humbler and a wiser man, determined to seek no happiness but in doing God's will, to repine no longer at sorrow, but resolutely to extract from it its divine uses. "And if," he repeated to himself, as his spirit would still occasionally sink at the prospect before him, "if I may see Mary's face no more on earth, there is a heaven beyond, where, in all humility, I trust that we shall be permitted to meet again."

The process that was taking place in Edward's mind, did not prevent him from feeling the utmost impatience for the conclusion of the voyage. Baffling winds prevented the ship from reaching the Cape until two months after leaving England, and there was again a considerable delay

before he was fairly under weigh for Australia. He had time to meditate upon his plans, to make and unmake many, but the only resolution he could finally determine upon, was that of proceeding in search of his father the moment he landed, leaving all beyond to the guidance of circumstances. Should his worst fears be realized, he might, perhaps, remain as a settler in the colony; —certainly he would not return to England unless he could return to claim his bride. His feelings towards his parents varied much; at first he could not think of his father except with anger and repugnance, but the perusal of his letters, and still more the divine principles which daily rooted themselves more deeply in his heart, softened the severity of his judgment, and pity took the place of resentment. Towards his mother he felt unmixed tenderness, and he dwelt upon the expressions of affection in her letters until his heart yearned towards her. Now that all other bonds were severed

he clung fondly to the thought of a mother's love.

At length the weary voyage drew to a close, and the high land above Port Jackson was descried in the distance. The singular conical mountain, called the Pigeon-house, came in view, and a thrill of joy ran through Edward's frame, as gliding up the beautiful inlet, until nearly abreast of the white houses of Sydney, the welcome sound of letting go the anchor announced to him that the moment of liberty was at hand.

He was struck, on first landing, by the busy English look of all around him, and though the irregularity of the buildings soon altered his favourable impression of the town, he was still astonished at the size and established air of so young a place.

He did not stay however to satisfy his curiosity, but profiting by information which one of his fellow-passengers had supplied, he proceeded immediately to buy horses and procure a guide, for his expedition up

the country. The second morning after his landing found him already on horseback. He had learned from the letters in his possession the name and situation of his father's estate. It was distant some days' journey in a south-westerly direction from Sydney, and when Mr. Hughes had settled there five-and-twenty years before, it had been far beyond the bounds of civilization, so that he had obtained a grant of fine land upon most unusually advantageous terms. Five-and-twenty years however had wrought a great change in the colony, and all the district adjoining Mr. Hughes was now allotted to various owners, and some of it cultivated, though the greater part was left in a state of nature as pasturage for cattle.

Edward started early to avoid the extreme heat, it being now the season of Australian summer. For some time they travelled upon a tolerable road parallel to the sea-shore; the guide then struck more

into the interior, towards the mountains which bounded their horizon on the right, and after passing the thick scrubby bush immediately round Sydney and a subsequent belt of forest, they came upon an open undulating country. Here the valleys were full of grass, brown in hue but extraordinarily nourishing in quality, while the ridges of the hills were crowned with trees, which reared their lofty forms clear of underwood, and far enough asunder to be traversed in every direction.

Edward gazed with astonishment at the giant eucalyptus with its stem of incredible diameter, the acacias with their yellow blossoms, the trumpet-flowered climbing tecoma, the countless new forms of vegetation that met his eye on every side. The novelty and independence of his position, the free air, the motion of his horse, all combined, after long confinement on board ship, to raise his spirits, naturally buoyant, and to give him a feeling of cheerful hope

to which he had long been a stranger. His unwillingness to believe in the possibility of sorrow returned upon him in full force.

During the middle of the day they halted at a spot where food and water were found for the horses. The heat was oppressive, and Edward withdrew to some distance where the forest gave more promise of shelter from the sun, but the foliage of the huge trees was so thin as to afford no depth of shade; his eyes ached with the arid burnt-up appearance of the grass, and found no relief from the pale hue that generally predominated over the vegetation; so that he thought with patriotic tenderness of the dewy freshness of the herbage, the deep luxuriant green, the heavy masses of shade in the woods of old England.

The guide was soon asleep, but Edward could not follow his example, and he lay watching the strange birds that flew fearlessly about, the bronze-coloured pigeons,

the parrots and the cockatoos, and listening to the sounds of busy insect life that filled the forest, until it was time to proceed on their journey. Late in the evening they reached the bark hut of a shepherd, who, glad of anything to break the monotony of his solitary life, bestirred himself to offer them such accommodation as the bush afforded. Tin mugs of tea, and a flat cake of dough, baked in the ashes, were quickly produced; Edward added some of his own stock of provisions, and had the satisfaction of perceiving his host's eyes glisten at the unaccustomed luxuries displayed. The hut contained but one sleeping-place, and the cleanliness of this was by no means unimpeachable. Edward would fain have passed the night in the open air, but he was assured that it would not be advisable for one so unacclimatized to do so, and he was forced to be content with rolling himself in his blanket, and lying on the floor.

There was no temptation to late hours, and all were early on foot.

The remainder of the journey offered nothing remarkable, and they arrived in good time on the last day at a hut only a few miles from Mr. Hughes's settlement. Here Edward determined to leave his guide and horses, and to proceed alone, the following morning, to his father's house. He had tried to ascertain from his guide and his shepherd-hosts all that was known of Mr. Hughes. The substance of this was, that he lived entirely upon his own land and scarcely ever went to Sydney; that he was very rich, and had great flocks and herds; that he was supposed to have made his money chiefly by stocking the runs of new settlers, and receiving a share of their profits. Edward watched anxiously for any word that might seem to hint at a cloud resting upon his character, but there was nothing said that could bear such an interpretation. On the contrary, Mr. Hughes

seemed to be much respected, and reckoned an excellent master.

The sun had not set when they reached their abode for the night, so, leaving the guide to prepare food, and make the necessary arrangements, Edward wandered forth alone. The excitement and exhilaration of the first day had worn off, and he felt restless and uneasy. He could not look to the meeting of the morrow without dread. How would his parents receive him, how would his father bear the sudden announcement that the barrier he had raised at such a sacrifice was cast down, his secret known, and known to the person from whom, above all others, it had been his object to conceal it!

"Why, oh, why," he exclaimed, "have I traversed these thousands of miles to destroy their peace without a reasonable hope of regaining my own! Have I not sacrificed myself and Mary to a false feeling of honour? Was I bound, after all, to

keep a secret never entrusted to me, at the cost of deserting one whom I was bound by all but legal ties to cherish and to protect?"

Edward had of late often doubted how far he was right in leaving England as he had done, he thought sometimes that it would have been wiser and fairer towards those to whom he owed so much, had he concealed nothing from them, but it was too late now to alter his line of conduct, even had he been more clearly convinced that it would have been right to do so. One thing was certain, that he should equally have lost Mary, and with this reflection he dismissed the question from his mind. He tried to picture to himself his parents, he encouraged himself to hope that natural love would make itself heard at the sight of their child, even under the present circumstances.

He felt sure that this would be the case with his mother, and his imagination busied

itself in fancying what she would be like, what she would be doing, what she would say, how she would receive him.

"When I tell her of Mary," he mentally exclaimed, "how her gentle nature will feel for me! There will be comfort in that, and in teaching her to love one who should have been her daughter."

As he fancied himself expatiating upon Mary's many perfections, her lovely qualities and her loving heart, his eyes involuntarily filled with tears, and her image rose before him. The sun was setting on the vast grassy plain that stretched far away around him, gleaming upon the waters of the stream that flowed at his feet, and reddening the low round hills that rose on either side; he thought of the sunset in another hemisphere, the last sunset he had seen with her, while her words of comfort and of holy trust again thrilled upon his ear. With a fervent prayer that he might yet return and repay her for her love, he

watched the disappearance of the radiant orb, and then moved sadly and slowly towards the hut, where he was to pass the night that yet remained between him and his destiny.

CHAPTER II.

What medicine can any leache's art
Yield such a sore, that doth her grievance hide,
And will to none her malady impart?

SPENCER.

EDWARD was early on foot, but he did not leave the hut for some time. From what he had learned respecting the habits of the settlers, he concluded that his best chance of finding his mother alone would be by reaching the station just after the heat of midday was passed, when his father would probably be out on horseback until evening closed in. The distance was not more than he could walk in a few hours, and the stream that flowed by the shepherd's hut would serve him as a guide, although he need not follow all its windings,

but might strike across the high ground, at the foot of which it found its way.

Shouldering his gun, which he had already learned to make an inseparable companion, Edward set forth with a feeling of nervous excitement that he could not repress.

While pursuing his solitary journey, his thoughts naturally dwelt upon the strange contrast his position at that moment presented to any part of his past life, or to what he had ever anticipated as likely to befall him. If, six months ago, he had looked forward to the present time, it would have been to see himself the master of an English home, the happy husband of a devoted wife, living the quietest domestic life, and pursuing the regular routine of a man of business, caring for little beyond his own immediate circle. Now 16,000 miles of ocean divided him from the land of his birth, from his promised home, and his affianced wife, and well would it be if there were nothing between them but the rolling

waters! Now he was treading, hopeless and homeless, the last few miles of foreign soil which separated him from parents he had never seen, whose existence he had never even dreamed of. It hardly seemed to him that he was the same man, so strangely different were the two positions.

The day was hot, and the distance proved greater than Edward had anticipated. It was past the middle of the day, when, after toiling up a steep hill, he emerged from the trees which crowned its summit, and saw below him, in the valley, what he instantly felt must be his father's home. He stood for some time, gazing upon it with varied and strong emotion.

The interior of New South Wales is guarded, for many hundred miles, by a mountain range, which follows the line of the coast at a distance varying from 40 to 80 miles. It was many years before the colonists passed this barrier, the strip of land lying between it and the sea being of

the most fertile description. Mr. Hughes, as we have said, penetrated further into the country than any one had done before him, and he had chosen a spot where the high land of the interior, instead of falling abruptly, as in the neighbourhood of Sydney, melted gradually by a succession of terraces and undulating hills, into the lowlands of the sea-coast. The valley upon which Edward looked, was bounded to the right by the faint line of the Blue Mountains, and was watered by a noble stream; on a sunny knoll, which sloped to the north, stood the farm-buildings, and a little removed from them was a substantial but low house, with a verandah running the whole length of the front. Numerous cottages and huts for the men, sheep-yards, cattle-sheds, stables, and barns, showed, by their size, that the reports of the settler's wealth had not been exaggerated. A good deal of land was enclosed, both on the side of the hill and on the banks of the stream. Just below Edward

was a fine field of maize, and beyond it a strong palisaded enclosure, around which he observed a great stir of men and animals.

Profiting by the concealment which the fence and the height of the maize afforded, Edward moved cautiously onward, till he reached a place from whence he could command a good view of the stock-yard, without danger of discovery. He quickly guessed that the operation he was witnessing was the arduous and necessary one of numbering and branding cattle, that they may be recognized, previous to turning them out upon a distant run.

The lowing and bellowing of the frightened beasts, the shouts of the men, and the loud reports that they produced by cracking their whips, the headlong pursuit of any refractory animal, and the turnings and twistings of the chase, in which horse and rider seemed equally eager, all formed a most exciting scene, and Edward almost forgot the object of his journey in the

interest with which he watched it. He was recalled to himself by discerning, as the dust which rose in clouds cleared off, the figure of a man on horseback at no great distance from him, who seemed to be directing and superintending the actions of the rest,—he felt that he saw his father!

The features were not distinguishable, but the figure was that of a tall man, the head slightly bent, as from age or care, and, to Edward's excited fancy, the whole air betraying a mixture of dignity and sadness, such as he was prepared to find in his father. While he kept his eyes fixed upon this one object, the business of the day seemed to be concluded, and the herds were driven off by mounted men in various directions. The master after giving his orders rode slowly away, and Edward saw, as he raised his hat in answer to the men's salutations, that his hair was white as the driven snow.

All was now quiet, and the time was come for approaching the house. As Edward

passed the farm-buildings, several rough-looking men stared at him, and some women who were cooking at the door of the huts suspended their operations to gaze, but no one addressed him. He did not stop, but seeing an open door entered at once, and found himself in a large kitchen, where a stout middle-aged woman was clearing away the remains of a meal that betokened a rude plenty.

In answer to her look of surprise and inquiry, Edward asked if he might come in and rest himself.

"Oh, yes," the woman said, and judging by his appearance she added, that her mistress was in the house, and he had better walk into the parlour; wiping her greasy hands, and taking off her apron, she led the way through a long uncarpeted passage into a sort of ante-room that opened upon the verandah, and was hung round with guns and fishing tackle. Leaving Edward here, she went on to announce

to her mistress the arrival of a stranger in want of refreshment.

The hospitality of the bush is unfailing, and Edward could hear orders given for his accommodation, in a voice that contrasted strongly with the homely accents of his conductor. His mother's voice! Did he now hear it for the first time? He could have sworn that it was familiar to his ear.

The servant returned, and ushering him into the room she had just left, shut the door behind him.

Edward's limbs shook, and such a mist came over his eyes that he saw nothing. It was a few moments before he could discern the form of a slight faded grey-haired woman who had risen from her seat, and stood with her knitting in her hand, watching him with surprise at receiving no answer to her words of welcome. Apparently his deadly paleness struck her as proceeding from exhaustion; for hastily begging him to sit down she brought forward a chair,

and said she would fetch him some restorative.

Edward made a strong effort to recover himself. He could hardly speak, his heart beat with such violence; but stretching forth his arms, he gasped out the one word, "Mother."

His mother started; she looked at him long and incredulously—advanced, stopped in trembling irresolution, then sprang forward, and in another moment he found himself pressed to her bosom, mingling his tears with hers, and both forgetting in that long-yearned for embrace, all that had led to their separation, all that had led to their reunion.

"My son, my son," exclaimed the mother, "are you in very truth my son? Can it be possible that I press you to my heart once more?"

Edward only answered by leading her to a chair, while kneeling at her feet, and holding both her hands, he kissed them again

and again with filial tenderness. It was long before either of them could speak coherently, still longer before Edward could satisfy the eager inquiries that poured upon him, when the first bewildering astonishment had passed off. His mother looked at him fondly and proudly; and then putting back the hair from his open brow, gazed with maternal complacency upon every feature of the face before her.

"You are so like your father," she said, "I could fancy I see him now as he was when we first met. I must have known you, even if I did not feel that you were my child."

"Dearest mother," murmured Edward, "can you then take me to your heart at once, stranger that I am."

His mother's eyes were blinded with tears as she still gazed.

"My little baby Edward," she exclaimed, "the infant that I hushed to sleep, and pillowed upon my bosom. Oh! the years that

have passed—the weary, weary years, and I have tried to fancy the change that each would work! but the image of the placid unconscious child always nestled back into my heart, I could not fancy you a man. Oh! my child, my own—own only child, God alone knows what I have suffered for you!" and again she strained him passionately to her bosom, as if fearful that he might be once more torn away.

"And am I like my father?" Edward asked.

"Like what he was," his mother answered, a change coming over her countenance. Edward was grieved at having raised a train of thought that checked the boundless joy of the moment, but it must be done sooner or later.

"Will my father receive me as you have done?" he asked with some timidity.

Without making a direct answer, his mother said hurriedly, "But what brought you here? how did you discover us? you have told me nothing."

Edward briefly recounted the manner in which his father's letters had fallen into his hands, but made no allusion to their contents. He saw the question that trembled on his mother's lips, and, bending his head that he might not distress her by his look, he kissed her hand with tender respect, as he answered the unspoken thought, "Yes, mother, I know all."

"Yet you have come; you do not shun your miserable parents!"

"God forbid!" he answered solemnly.

His mother could only bless him amid her convulsive sobs, but both felt relieved that the dread secret need not weigh upon their souls as a subject too terrible to be touched upon.

After a few moments, Edward again reverted to his father. What would his mother advise? Should he remain and see him, or leave her to prepare the way for so agitating a meeting?

The latter alternative was decided upon,

and Edward was accordingly to leave the house before his father returned, and to pass the night at the shepherd's hut. He was glad to put off the meeting which he now feared even more than before, from his mother's evident doubt as to his reception. She knew but too well the effect upon her husband of the revival of the painful passages of his life, and she wished no one but herself to be witness of the struggle in which she hardly dared to hope that paternal feeling would gain the victory over humiliation and disappointment.

The mother and son did not dare to indulge long in each other's society, and Edward was dismissed to his miserable lodging with so many tender cautions and careful injunctions from his mother, that he reminded her with a smile, that he was no longer the helpless infant she had left him.

"You must let me watch over you as if you were," she answered; "remember how very precious you are to me. I believe I

rather wish you were an infant still," she added as she once more bade him farewell.

Edward passed the hours of the night anxiously, but not unhappily. The certainty of his mother's tenderness soothed his heart, and filled up the aching void in his affections. Anxious to get over the dreaded interview, he mounted his horse early, and retraced his steps to the settlement. He wished, if possible, to see his mother again alone, and he looked about in the vain hope of meeting her. He saw no one, so dismounting and tying up his horse, he entered the house as he had done the day before, and found his way to the room where he had left his mother. He heard her speaking earnestly as he opened the door, and upon her exclamation at his entrance, he saw the person whom she had been addressing—the man whom he had watched the previous day—turn hastily away with a movement of displeasure. Leading Edward forward;

his mother endeavoured, with gentle force, to make her husband speak, and look at him.

"You must see him, Walter," she said; "you must see our boy, he is here at your feet. Oh, turn and speak to him, spare him, innocent as he is, any further suffering."

Edward took the cold hand that lay clenched upon the table, but he almost let it fall when his father turned suddenly upon him, the ashy paleness of his face, and the quivering of his lips showing the inward struggle, as he said in a hollow voice—

"Boy, I would have spared myself and you, but it was not to be! God help me to bear this, also."

And without another word he left the room.

Grieved and disappointed, Edward turned to his mother; "I was wrong to come," he said sadly, "I ought to have foreseen that it would be so, and yet it was but natural when left without a home, and without a

tie, that I should seek those upon whom alone I had any claim for affection."

"Do not repent your coming, for my sake, dearest Edward. Your father will soon feel pleasure in seeing you."

"No, mother, he will not. My presence must be painful to him. I will not stay; if I must be miserable, I can at least spare him; I will seek some other part of the globe to wear out my aimless existence."

"And will you leave me?"

"Oh, mother, what shall I do? tell me, guide me, I will be led by you."

"Then you must stay. You must not suffer yourself to be wounded even by apparent unkindness; believe me, my son, it is but to disguise other feelings. Do not judge your father harshly, and do not; oh, do not leave me to begin again the work of years. If I had not forgotten that I was a mother before," she added, tenderly drawing him towards her, "how shall I forget it now that I have seen you, and that I have

left again a mother's joy, and pride, and love. Edward, you cannot be so cruel, so selfish."

"Selfish! mother; is it not rather selfishness to stay?"

"No, no, no! The first struggle is over. You will see how, in a few days, all will go well. Will you not trust to my knowledge of your father?"

Edward allowed himself to be comforted by his mother's words. She strove by her arguments to inspire herself as well as him with confidence, so passionate was her desire of retaining him. But for this strong motive, her timid nature would have given way at once, before the storm of despair that had swept over her unhappy husband at hearing of his son's arrival; but for the maternal love which, so long denied its legitimate scope, now at length asserted and vindicated its power, she would have warned Edward to fly at once, and not even to appear before his father. The silence that Mr. Hughes had observed for years upon every topic

connected with his early life, had led his wife to believe what she earnestly hoped, that time had softened the remembrance of those days, and of the fatal error that had led to his expatriation; but this night had revealed to her that whatever might be his outward composure, remorse had but sunk the deeper into his soul, and to her horror she found that paternal feeling seemed, as it were, crushed out by the overwhelming sense of dishonour, which weighed him to the earth.

It is possible that but for Edward's somewhat sudden entrance, all Mrs. Hughes's entreaties would have been fruitless, and his father would have refused to see him. In answer to her arguments, he had only replied, that Edward could not desire to meet a parent towards whom he must entertain no feelings, but those of contempt and hatred. In vain did Mrs. Hughes urge that it was impossible her son should feel anything, but the respect and love which

filled her own heart. "You are a woman, and a wife," he said, with a strange mixture of tenderness and sarcasm; and when she still maintained her ground, "do you think," he urged, "that the presence of one whom I have so deeply injured, can ever be endurable to me?"

"If you have injured him, Walter, injure him no more," answered his wife; "let him have what happiness a home can afford. Have not I too a right to be considered?"

Mr. Hughes was surprised at such an unwonted appeal from his meek wife, but Edward's entrance had prevented his reply.

The interview having once taken place, Mrs. Hughes was determined to act as if her prayer had been granted, and with the desperate courage of a timid nature when once aroused, insisted upon Edward's remaining in the house, ordered his baggage to be brought, and installed him at once in a convenient apartment.

This done, and the excitement over, her

spirit began to sink, and it was not without uneasiness that both mother and son awaited the return of Mr. Hughes. He did not come in until late, and the evening meal was prepared. He looked sad and weary, but took his seat, without evincing any surprise at seeing Edward, and without making any allusion to what had passed. Edward did not venture to break the silence, nor was it until some time had elapsed, that his mother asked some trifling question, which was briefly answered, after which silence again reigned.

When the supper was removed, Edward fancied that his father would perhaps address him, would ask him some questions about England, his past life, or his future prospects, but no, if he spoke, it was but upon some necessary subject to his wife; of Edward's presence he seemed totally unconscious, and presently retiring to a distant table, he became absorbed in writing or in calculation. Edward took up a

colonial newspaper, which was the only thing at hand, but he could not read. The constraint and coldness of the evening were intolerable to him. He felt his spirit rising and his heart hardening itself, against the father towards whom he would have rushed that morning, overflowing with pity, and eager by every testimony of affection and respect to atone for the involuntary suffering he was about to cause. And yet, when he looked at the man before him, bent, but not with the weight of years, and fancied that he could trace the sorrow and remorse of a life, in the snowy whiteness of the hair, in the deep lines that furrowed the brow, in the sunken eyes ever fixed upon the ground, in the dejected expression of features that had evidently been cast in a mould of dignity and beauty, in the spiritless motions of the tall figure formed for activity and command, his better feelings again rose within him, and he longed to pour balm into the wounded spirit.

The time came for retiring to rest, and as Edward approached his mother, to wish her good night, he caught his father's eye for a moment resting upon him. His first impulse was to throw himself at his feet, to ask a father's blessing, a father's welcome, to his new home. A word, even a pause, would have broken the ice, but the look was withdrawn, the impassive expression resumed, and his father had moved away before the words reached Edward's lips. His mother apparently fearing what he might say of the evening's reception, staid only a moment to bestow a fond maternal caress, and hurried after her husband.

Edward withdrew to pass his first night under the parental roof, in no enviable state of mind.

CHAPTER III.

Not always fall of leaf, nor ever spring,
  Not always night, yet not eternal day,
The saddest birds a season find to sing,
  The roughest storm a calm may soon allay,
Thus with succeeding turns God tempereth all,
That man may hope to rise, yet fear to fall.

SOUTHWELL.

THE following day was Saturday, a busy day in the bush. Mrs. Hughes was occupied the whole morning in weighing out and dispatching supplies of beef, tea, sugar, tobacco, and flour, to serve the men upon the outlying stations during the ensuing week. The scene was a stirring one, and Edward was amused for a time in watching the arrival and departure of rough looking men, and of strings of drays and pack bullocks. Soon however he grew tired of

having nothing to do, his mother could not attend to him, his father had been out since day-break according to his invariable custom, everybody was busy, and time hung heavy on his hands.

After examining each corner of the extensive kitchen-garden, of the flower-garden where even English weeds were cherished, of the farm-buildings, and of the enclosures, he strolled listlessly down to the banks of the river. While there he heard a troop of horses come clattering down the valley, and following the men who were driving them for want of better occupation, he entered a small paddock enclosed by a high and strong paling. Here he found that the best looking steeds were being saddled for the herdsmen, whose business it was to drive home every evening to the enclosures a herd of cattle lately purchased, until they had become reconciled to their new locality.

Edward volunteered to join the party,

and a good horse was immediately chosen for him, while the head man, furnishing him with that formidable weapon a stock whip, gave him at the same time many cautions respecting the necessity of a firm seat. Edward felt a little indignant, knowing himself to be a good horseman, indeed almost the only extravagances with which his guardian had ever had to reproach him were those into which he had been led by his love of riding. He soon found that he had yet something to learn.

They rode for an hour or two over the open undulating country which has been already described, until they came to a narrow gully among the hills, the sides of which were very steep and covered with loose crumbling stones. At the bottom of this gulley were the cattle.

The stockman Ben drew up as soon as he got sight of them, and calling Edward's attention to a narrow pass that could be discerned at the head of the gully, he told

him that their object was to reach that pass, and turn all such animals as might make for it.

"If one gets through," he said, "we are done for, no man can stop the rest from following. Two of us must go forward, the rest must keep the beasts from straggling as we drive them down. It is sharp work for a new hand, but if your 're so minded and think yourself man enough, come with me."

Edward would not have refused for the world, and the stockman, as if to try his mettle, set off over the broken ground at a pace that was truly startling; they kept along the ridge of the hill until they were a little ahead of the cattle, when the leader again drew up for a moment and pointing downwards said, "They will wind us directly, and then there will be no time to lose. Mind how you go."

Half an hour before, Edward would hardly have attempted what his guide pointed out

as their only road, but the gallop had made his blood flow quickly, his courage and his pride were both roused, his horse had proved himself already so clever and surefooted as to give him great confidence, and silencing every qualm of doubt by the reflection that where one man could go another could follow, he only made a gesture of impatient assent and followed down the precipitous bank without a moment's hesitation.

As the experienced Ben had foreseen, the cattle soon took the alarm, and made straight for the opening. It became a race between them and the horsemen, and as the unwieldly animals had much the advantage of ground, the issue was for some time doubtful. Now began the danger and the excitement of the business. Shouting, cracking his whip, urging his horse by voice, hand, and heel, Ben dashed along over places that would have sent a shudder through the most reckless fox-hunter. After him sped Edward; he had scarcely time to

see where he was going, none to choose, and trusting entirely to his horse, he was satisfied at first with keeping a steady seat. As they drew nearer the goal and the excited cattle in his rear came charging on with their horns carried low, and their tails curled over their backs, he felt himself entering more and more into the spirit of the scene. To stop had long been impossible, and now nothing could have made him wish to do so. Catching up the cry of his guide, he too shouted, and animating his horse by his own eagerness, aided by his light weight, he dashed forward at such a pace, that had they not at that moment reached the spot they were aiming at, he might have gained the honour of passing the hitherto unrivalled Ben. There was no time for speech, wheeling their horses about and cracking their whips, it seemed for a moment doubtful whether they could stop the onward career of the half-wild cattle, and had the herd been larger, so that the impetus of the

hindmost would have overborne the check given to the foremost, they must have been thrown down and trampled under foot. As it was, the tide turned, and our heroes were soon driving the whole body quietly before them down the ravine. Ben then found time to address his companion, and to express in flattering terms his surprise at the success of his first essay.

"This is a capital horse," said Edward.

"He 's not a bad one," said Ben, "and you 're a nice weight; but you did it like a native, and that 's a fact."

Edward was somewhat elated, but his experience for the day was not yet ended. When the cattle emerged from the narrow gully, the difficulty of driving them increased, but all went well until they reached some ground fringed with trees, which stood at first singly or in detached groups, but soon thickened into forest. For this the cattle made with ready instinct. Edward had now to learn what was meant by an ex-

perienced stock-horse. Following a sturdy bull which had singled off from its companions, he found his horse fully as eager in the chase as himself. Trained to stick close to the object of pursuit, it wheeled in and out among the gum-trees, stopping when at full speed and turning so suddenly without touch of bit or spur, as to take the rider quite by surprise. After sundry narrow escapes, Edward ended by being shot off upon the grass with such violence, as effectually to put out the spark of vanity which had been kindled in his bosom by the success of his first effort. Mounting with difficulty, he made an attempt to continue the chase, but found with some satisfaction that his services were no longer required, and that he might ride quietly home, his fall having shaken him a good deal.

The evening passed off much as the previous one had done, except that Edward made more attempts at conversation, and asked his father two or three questions concerning

Australian life, which were answered concisely, but not unwillingly. No one mentioned England, or touched upon any subject that might lead to the remembrance of times gone by.

Supper over, Mr. Hughes retired to his books and accounts, while Edward, having obtained a volume from his mother's small store of standard works, either read or conversed with her in a low tone. He fancied once or twice that his father seemed to be listening to them; though he did not raise his head, there was occasionally a long pause between the turning of the leaves of his book, or a cessation of the sound of his pen upon the paper. This might be only accidental, but it had the effect of checking the freedom of intercourse on Edward's side; and availing himself of the pain and stiffness consequent upon his fall, he retired early to rest.

Mr. Hughes returned his son's good night without looking up, while Mrs. Hughes

hastened away for a number of infallible remedies, among the stock of medicines with which every settler in the bush is provided for himself and his dependents.

To oblige his mother, Edward consented to obey a part of her directions; he saw that it was a pleasure to her to busy herself about him, and he suffered her to bathe his head, and to foment his arm, more to indulge her maternal anxiety, than because he felt such cares to be necessary. It was a pleasant feeling to himself, also, to have a mother hovering about him, smoothing down his pillow, and assuring herself of his comfort; he could believe himself at home now, and he told his mother that he almost wished to be ill that he might enjoy her nursing.

Mrs. Hughes's skill was by no means contemptible, and Edward was willing to give it due honour when he saw her the following morning and assured her of his perfect health. His father, who was in the room, listened to his assurances but made no inquiry himself.

It was Sunday, and Edward had some curiosity to know how the day was observed in the bush. He noticed that instead of their usual homely habit, his parents were both simply but handsomely dressed; and he was struck with his father's appearance in the garb of an English gentleman, which, unpicturesque as it is, has at least the advantage of deriving whatever merit it may possess from the wearer. A man may pass muster well enough in a working dress, but any latent vulgarity of air is instantly brought into strong relief, by the assumption of a black coat and trowsers.

"There is no church within reach, is there, mother?" asked Edward.

"No, nor is there a clergyman for many miles. We have service for our own people and any of our neighbours that may like to come; for we have neighbours, though they would hardly be reckoned such in England. One or two generally ride over to join us."

"And who reads the service?"

"Your father."

Edward felt some surprise that a man of the character, and in the position of his father, should put himself forward so conspicuously. His mother told him afterwards that they had begun the practice of regularly observing the Sunday, and of reading divine service, upon their first coming out when they were almost alone in the land. Settlers had gradually closed up round them, and first one and then another glad to keep up the habits of their old homes had begged permission to join, though they had not courage, nor in some cases education, to follow Mr. Hughes's example on their own settlements.

"Your father was very anxious to find some one to take his place, or to obtain the services of a clergyman; but he could do neither. And he is so looked up to here! It would be long before any clergyman got half as much influence."

Some of the neighbours of whom Mrs.

Hughes spoke, now began to make their appearance. All, both men and women, came on horseback, except one large family who might be observed in the distance toiling slowly along in a waggon drawn by bullocks. These had come ten or twelve miles, the others from much farther off.

The first who arrived were an English officer and his wife, who had lately bought some land which the first occupier sold that he might go farther into the interior, and perform over again the office of pioneer. Then came two young men, sons of one of the early settlers, and born in the colony, tall slight youths, with an appearance of intelligence and activity, but no great polish. After them came a father and son of the true emigrant stamp, stout yeomen from the north of England, hard-working and prosperous. The bullock-waggon contained the rest of the family, from the grandmother, who had followed the fortunes of her adventurous daughter, to the child in arms that

would know no home but that in the new country. Mrs. Hughes received all with kindness and courtesy, but more especially the last arrivals.

Edward found himself an object of curiosity, a stranger not being often met with in such a thinly peopled country. He felt some awkwardness from not knowing how far his relationship was to be avowed, and he did not know how to answer the questions respecting his arrival, and his intentions, which were put to him especially by the two young natives. He looked round for his mother in the hope of catching a hint from her; but she was occupied in supplying refreshments to the younger portion of the company. His father had not appeared since breakfast, and he could hardly have hoped for help from him had he been present. His only resource was to keep in the background and say as little as possible, until the service was begun for which they were all assembled.

When Mr. Hughes came into the room, after a slight greeting, he led the way to a large out-house, well lighted, and provided with chairs, benches, stools, and logs of wood, upon which were seated all the men who could be spared from their occupations, several women, and one or two blacks who behaved with decorum, but seemed in no degree to enter into the meaning of what was going on.

Edward had chosen a corner from whence he could see without being seen, and he listened with interest to the deep tones of his father's voice, as with solemn emphasis but never raising his eyes from his book, he read parts of the Church of England form of prayer, and ended with a short, but well-selected discourse.

The behaviour of the congregation was full of reverence, even the children scarcely stirred. Edward must be pardoned if his attention was more given to the assembly, and the man whom they were listening to,

than to the object for which they were met. His imagination was always busy, and he occupied himself in fancying what passed in the minds of others rather than in regulating what arose in his own.

As he sat with his eyes fixed upon his father, no sentence escaped him which could be made to bear any reference to either of them. He forgot how many times his father must have read the same words, and that to him they could bear no other meaning than they had borne for years. He thought he could detect a difference of intonation that looked like suppressed feeling, when passages occurred in the Psalms expressive of deep misery and abasement, and it seemed to him that those which spoke of hope and trust, were uttered as by one who felt he had no portion in them.

Edward thought so much of his father, and identified himself so completely with the feelings that he ascribed to him, that he could not, without a thrill of pain, hear

him read the words "I will visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation."

"Does he indeed feel that his sin has been visited upon me," he thought, "and is it this which makes him shrink so from me? Oh, my father, that you did but know how willingly I would efface such regrets from your mind!"

The discourse which Mr. Hughes had chosen was upon the text "Come unto me all ye that travail, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Again Edward listened with the keenest interest, and again it seemed to him that justly and impressively as the words were given, there was a want of the fervour and energy of conviction, which, however controlled, must have made itself felt, had the reader personally experienced the relief of casting all care upon Him who careth for us. No, Edward knew that his father was yet weary and heavy laden, and had found no rest. To himself

the sermon spoke forcibly, recalling all the good and courageous resolutions he had formed during his voyage, and the peace that had dawned upon him when he had first set before him as his one object, to do what was right and trust the issues to Providence, to take no thought for the morrow, but to do the duty of the day.

The service over, those who had attended prepared to return to their distant homes.

The Yorkshireman, of whom we have already spoken, Mr. Anderson, had some question to ask Mr. Hughes, and stopped him as he was seeking, according to his usual custom, to escape unobserved and unaccosted to his house. As they talked together, they approached the spot where Edward was standing with the other young men, and Mr. Anderson said to his son—

"We must be ready for a start on Tuesday morning, Jack. It is quite true that some of M'Gregor's men have been prowling about our new run."

The young man's eye brightened as he answered, "Never fear, sir, we will be before them yet. Why can we not start to-morrow."

"I think we might make a stage or two before nightfall. We must choose our strongest cattle, for M'Gregor is an antagonist not to be despised. You are wondering at our haste, young gentleman," said Mr. Anderson turning to Edward, "but the thing is this. Whoever stocks a new run first, has a right to it, and I, thinking myself safe, have neglected doing so with some fine grazing ground we lately found to the north of this, until I am afraid others have found it besides me, and we are likely to have a race for the possession of it."

"So much the better," said Jack, "it is the most exciting thing in the world, better than a kangaroo hunt out and out."

"You were a first-rate leader," said Mr. Anderson to his silent neighbour; "how

well I remember the time when we topped the last hill at sundown, and saw the enemy at the bottom, a good ten miles before us. Any body but you would have given up."

"And what was done?" asked Edward, eagerly.

"Why you see, young man, my good friend here knew the country, and our cattle were pretty fresh, so we stole a march, passed a bad ford, which shortened our distance, in the middle of the night, and when day dawned, the tables were turned, for we were within easy distance of our point with only the loss of a few cattle. Perhaps you would like to come with us, and see something of the ways of the country?"

Edward looked at his father, but he did not seem to be listening.

"Oh, he will mount you, never fear that: I am promising for you, sir," said Mr. Anderson appealing to Mr. Hughes, "I am promising that you will furnish a horse

for your young friend, Mr —, I beg your pardon, I do not think I have heard your name?"

Edward was taken aback; his former name he had no right to, his real name he did not know, he was not quite sure that he might assume the one by which his father was called. He made no answer, but before the silence became awkward, his joy was great to hear his father say with cool composure, as the merest matter of form—

"Edward Hughes, my son, sir."

"Your son!" exclaimed Mr. Anderson; "I have known you these twelve years, and never heard that you had a son."

"He has been educated in England," answered Mr. Hughes.

"I wonder you could make up your mind to part with him," observed the honest farmer, "and his mother too! It would be long before I should bring my wife to send any of her young ones so far away. And yet we could well spare a few," he added,

with a complacent look of pride at the tall fair girls, the sturdy boys, and the curly-headed group of both sexes, who were crowding round their old grandmother.

Mr. Hughes made no farther remark upon the subject, but saying that there were plenty of horses at Edward's orders, and that he could not do better than join the proposed expedition, he left them to make their own arrangements. Edward soon received the necessary instructions, and promised to be with his new friends early on the following day.

The farm had now returned to its usual air of quiet and solitude; the men who were not obliged to attend to the milking, feeding, or herding, of the stock, lounged about, enjoying the bushman's luxury of smoking with uninterrupted zest.

Mr. Hughes came out of his own room only for dinner, and Edward was left alone with his mother. She had yet much to hear of his early life, and she was never

weary of questioning him respecting every detail of his boyhood and his youth. He freely told her all—all but what lay nearest to his heart—his engagement and its termination. He could not bring himself to speak of Mary; it would have been easier to do so when he first met his mother, but now that the ebullition of excited feeling was over, the want of habitual intimacy made itself felt and his natural reserve reasserted itself.

Time did not hang heavy on their hands as they wandered together through the garden. More pains had been taken in the inclosure and laying out of the grounds, than it is usual to see in a new settlement, and the eye and hand of cultivated taste might be discerned in the evident care to preserve all the natural beauty which the scene afforded, as well as in the endeavour to add by judicious planting such as might be wanting to it. Mr. Hughes's estate was situated at a considerable elevation above

the level of the sea, and there was in consequence an absence of the almost tropically luxuriant vegetation found upon the coast. In return, the temperature was such as to suit many European plants and shrubs, and the garden abounded in the flowers and fruits of both hemispheres. Mr. Hughes had avoided the error of most colonists, who in their eagerness to clear the ground and to effect the most necessary improvements, are apt to disregard the future appearance of their home, which has too often a bare unfurnished look from want of shelter. He had on the contrary selected for his house a spot naturally wooded, and by sparing the finest of the trees, he had given at once to his home an air of English comfort and of less recent creation than most of the settlements in a young colony can boast.

In the garden which, sloping to the north, received the full sun, the eye rested with pleasure upon plants which recalled the

old country, while the graceful native acacia with its tufted yellow flowers and bean-shaped pods, the wild fig, the casuarina, with its long weeping hair-like branches, and an occasional Seaforthia palm gave a characteristic beauty to the scene.

Edward did full justice to his father's home, but he enjoyed even more the dryness and buoyancy of the atmosphere, and was willing to believe the climate to be, as his mother assured him, the finest and the healthiest in the whole world.

While strolling thus, Edward saw his acquaintance Ben, the stock-man, coming towards them.

"Will you like to come and take a look at your horse?" he said; "I have just driven him in to be ready for to-morrow; I suppose we make an early start."

"Are you going too, Ben?"

"Yes, sir," said Ben, looking as modest as he could but with a secret twinkle of the eye, that showed he was aware of his own

reputation; "master thinks I may, perhaps, be of use to look after your horse as I am accustomed to this sort of thing."

"I wonder that your father can spare Ben," said Mrs. Hughes, "it is very kind of him."

The horse was now led out; it was not one that Edward had seen before; he looked at it with admiration, for it was a noble animal of more strength and bone than the usual colonial breed, and, as yet, unharmed by the severe nature of the work to which they are exposed. Ben watched Edward with evident satisfaction.

"This is the best horse in the colony," said he, "master's own prime favourite; he has never let any one back him but himself."

"Then where is the one I am to have?" asked Edward, drawing back, disappointed.

"Bless you, sir, it is this one," answered Ben; "I was told to fetch him in for you two hours ago, by master himself, and if you

don't keep forward, it's not his fault, that's all."

"How very, very kind of my father," exclaimed Edward, touched at this mark of consideration: "come, mother, come, I must go and thank him directly, this is the second time to-day that I owe him thanks. Oh, there he is," and he was about to dart away, but his mother held him back. She too had caught sight of Mr. Hughes, walking with his usual heavy step and downcast look, and saw that he was not aware of their approach.

"Stop, Edward," she said softly, turning away, "you must never speak to your father when you see him in that thoughtful mood, he cannot bear to be disturbed, and, moreover, he does not like to be thanked, or to have any notice taken of what he does. You see he is beginning to think of you, and you have gained ground by not forcing yourself upon him; you had much better keep to the same line of conduct."

"Indeed, mother, I think you are wrong;

I must show him that I feel his kindness."

"My dear Edward, do you not think that I know your father best?"

Edward was silenced, but not convinced. He had been thinking of his father with so much interest all day, he had felt so much gratitude at hearing himself acknowledged as a son, and was now so much pleased at finding himself treated like one, that he could hardly obey his mother, or be persuaded that the expression of such natural feelings would have other than a good effect in bringing them nearer together. He submitted, however, reluctantly, and the result was that when he met his father in the evening, though he muttered a few words of acknowledgment, it was in so cold and constrained a manner, that he felt as if the gulf between them had but widened in his anxiety to overpass it.

CHAPTER IV.

O! this life
Is nobler than attending for a check;
Richer than doing nothing for a bauble;
Prouder than rustling in unpaid-for silk.

SHAKSPEARE.

As Edward pursued his way towards Mr. Anderson's station on the following day, he thought often and with much regret of the coldness towards his father into which he had been involuntarily led; all reflections were however speedily set aside upon arriving at Warragong, by the bustle and excitement of preparation. Ben had taken Edward under his special protection, and had equipped him completely for an expedition into the bush; his saddle-bags were stored with flour, tea, sugar, dried meat,

and materials for procuring a light, though they had not as yet the bushman's never-failing accompaniment of a pipe and tobacco. To the saddle were fastened by various straps, the blanket and coat for sleeping out at night, rope, tether, and hobbles for securing the horse, a tin quart pot for boiling tea, and a smaller one for drinking.

Thus furnished, and equipped in a loose checked shirt, no neckcloth, leather trousers confined round the waist by a handkerchief, a broad-brimmed hat upon his head, a whip in his hand, and a carbine slung over his back, Edward, though as yet encumbered by the unaccustomed number of articles that he and his horse had to carry, felt as if he was prepared for any length of journey and for any difficulties, and he could not forbear a momentary smile as he imagined the contrast that his appearance as a steady plodding clerk, must have presented to the bold bandit-like figure into which he was now transformed.

All was soon ready, Mr. Anderson, his eldest son Jack, another who with equal economy of syllables was called Tom, two men to help to drive the cattle, and to remain in charge when the new grazing ground was reached, a spare horse or two in case of accidents, and a small herd selected from the finest and strongest animals in Mr. Anderson's possession, were now assembled in front of the house, and set forward as soon as the heat of the day was passed, to make what progress they could before night. The pasture to which they were bound was several days journey in the interior, and the great object being to distress the animals as little as possible, the procession moved along at a slow pace.

The young Andersons were in the highest spirits, and Edward caught their eagerness. It did not take long to make acquaintance under such circumstances, and they were soon talking together like old friends, while

the way was beguiled by stories of former exploits, and similar expeditions.

The first two or three days presented little novelty. They halted at night at outlying stations where the cattle could be secured within an enclosure, and the men could procure shelter, if nothing more, in a back hut. On the fourth day, the bounds of civilization were passed, and the encampment was a much more serious operation. It was necessary to watch the cattle all night, to prevent them from making their escape, and returning, as they would infallibly have done, to the point from whence they started. Edward observed with interest the precautions taken. Mr. Anderson as leader of the expedition rode forward to look for a convenient spot, and having selected an open space of good pasturage confined on one side by a natural barrier of water and rock, the cattle were all driven together, and he, his sons, and Edward, rode slowly round the remaining three sides, keeping

them within bounds. Edward wondered what was to come next, but his companions who enjoyed his inexperience, only assured him that the whole night was to be passed in a similar manner. The men meanwhile had disappeared among some trees and brushwood at a little distance, leaving their hobbled horses to make the most of their time of rest. They presently returned loaded with huge bundles of wood, which they proceeded to dispose in heaps, ten or twelve yards apart, along the line that the horsemen were guarding. As soon as enough wood was collected the piles were set on fire, and they blazed up, casting a strong glare of light, and forming a wall of flame round the cattle. Mr. Anderson then gave the word to the riders, and they retired one by one through the intervening spaces, the bewildered animals having no courage to follow.

"Now boys," said he, as they met once more on the outside, "we will take care

of ourselves; off with your saddle-bags, Master Ned, tether your horse and let us see what sort of cook you can make, while the others help to lay in a stock of wood for the night. Can you manufacture a damper yet?"

As this article of food consists merely of a flat cake of flour and water baked in the ashes, Edward acquitted himself of his task tolerably well.

As soon as the water hissed in the numerous quart pots, and the saddle-bags had produced the corned beef and other necessaries with which they were stored, Mr. Anderson with a hearty shout summoned all stragglers, and throwing themselves upon the ground, they commenced the attack with an enjoyment, heightened in Edward's case, by the exercise he had taken, the freshness of the air, and the exhilarating independence of the mode of life.

A watch was set to replenish the fires during the night, and to take care that no

adventurous animal found an opening through which to escape from the magic circle, for had one succeeded, it would have been well-nigh impossible to restrain the rest. Having settled with his sons and Edward that they should take their turn with the rest, Mr. Anderson rolled himself in his blanket, disposed his saddle as a pillow, and was soon fast asleep, an example speedily followed by all but the watch.

Edward was anxious not to fail in the duty set him, and he woke long before the time appointed; fearful of sleeping too long if he again lay down, he rose and walked round the camp. All was silent: nothing stirred but one of the watch, who occasionally replenished a sinking fire, and caused the bright flames to leap up, gleaming upon the polished horns of the wearied cattle as they slept quietly round, and causing the forms of such as were white or light coloured to stand out for a moment in strong relief from among the dark red mass; while the

figures of the sleeping men were suddenly revealed, and as suddenly hidden again in the impenetrable darkness which seemed to hem in the circle of light.

Edward was slowly returning to his place, when a hand laid upon his shoulder made him start. He looked round and saw Ben, who with a gesture to enforce silence, drew him aside.

"Are your eyes good, young gentleman?" he said; "come away out of the flash of the fires."

Edward followed into the darkness, and Ben led him silently towards some higher ground; then directing his attention towards a point northward of their position, he asked,

"Do you see anything, or is it my fancy?"

Edward looked long and steadily.

"I think I can perceive a light,—yes there, certainly; it brightened for a moment. It must be a fire, it is too unsteady for anything else."

"You see no flame?"

"No, it is as if the fire was hid, and only the light of it visible."

"Just so," said Ben; "this is a bad job."

"Why? there can be no building there to burn. Do you think they are firing the bush?"

"If we were on the other side of the hill, sir, how do you think our encampment would look?"

"Then you think it is the light of an encampment."

"No doubt of it," answered Ben; "there is some rising ground between, so that we only see the glare and not the fires."

"Can it be M'Gregor?"

"Of course it is," returned Ben; "and he is ahead of us too."

"How far off should you say the light was?"

"I can hardly tell, eight or ten miles perhaps, there is a great glare from so many fires. If they have seen ours we shall have little chance of catching them."

"Had we not better put the fires out then?"

"And let the cattle go straight home at once? No, no, sir, that won't do, we must do something though, so let us wake Mr. Anderson."

They accordingly proceeded to the place where the honest settler had stretched his burly form. He started up in a moment, and hearing their tale, repaired to the point whence the light was most easily visible. After looking for some time, he gave a grunt of dissatisfaction, and thrusting his hands into his pockets returned to the camp, without a word.

"They have got the start of us, sir," said Ben, "this time."

"If we are not seen, we shall do yet," answered Mr. Anderson cheerily, "keep down the fires as much as possible, and get them out in the morning with little smoke. We are not to be beat without a struggle, hey, boys."

The men who had already gathered round were unanimous in their resolution not to give in.

"Our cattle are fresh and strong, that's one good thing," observed Ben.

"I wonder what state theirs are in, they must have come a longer distance," said Mr. Anderson; "I should like to know."

"Should you," answered Ben, "I was thinking the same, and I can easily get forward upon their road, and lie behind a rock in some narrow pass till they are gone by."

"You must join us then at the Devil's Nick."

"Have you decided upon that line, sir?"

"Yes, it is rougher, but it is shorter, and there is no danger of being watched. You remember we came back that way after we had discovered the run, and there was a curious cleft in the rock to which we gave the name."

"It's a rough road for cattle, indeed,"

said Ben, musingly; "do you reckon upon getting through before nightfall?"

"We will try at all events. An early start, and a good rest at noon; never shake your head, man, depend upon it, we shall succeed."

Ben looked doubtful, but said no more.

"You go on foot upon this scouting expedition?" asked Edward.

"Yes, the horses would neigh, and betray us."

"If any one will take care of my horse, I should like to accompany you."

"You will have a good twenty mile walk," said Mr. Anderson, "and part of it in a broiling sun. You had much better not go."

"If the young man wishes to learn the ways of the country,"—interposed Ben.

"I do, and I can have no better opportunity; if I knock up you must leave me behind."

"What, after master's special charge?

no, sir, I must stick by you whatever happens; but you had better put yourself in light marching order, for as soon as we have had some food, we must be off."

The grazing ground for which the rival parties were running so keen a race, lay to the north-west, beyond a chain of hills, spurs from which branched off in different directions. At the foot of one of these spurs they were now encamped, and from their position they might select either of two valleys for the remainder of their course. The one which they had first intended to follow, though sweeping too far to the east, afforded much the best ground to travel over. The other which Mr. Anderson now proposed to take, formed the chord of the arc and was consequently much shorter, but was narrower, rose more rapidly, led through the stony gully called the Devil's Nick, and to a dangerous pass in the hills. After all which difficulties, there yet remained a river to be crossed, which those who took the other

line would ford at a much more favourable spot. The advantage of keeping his march secret, however, determined Mr. Anderson to run all risks, and his chief anxiety now was, to know exactly the condition of his adversary's cattle, that he might avoid pressing his own more than was absolutely necessary.

Ben and his companion proceeded in a direction which would bring them on the line of the enemy's route, two or three miles ahead of their camping place, and as four hours yet remained before daylight, they hoped to accomplish the distance easily, the more so as the moon was now up and enabled them to choose their footing.

Ben had taken the bearing of the distant light, by a pocket compass, and he was therefore able to rejoice when it became invisible from the increasing brightness of the moon, in the reflection that the same cause would remove all danger of their own encampment being discovered, if only suf-

ficient care was taken to prevent the smoke in the morning from betraying it.

As they journeyed on, he became very communicative, and Edward was amused by the history he gave of his own life, which had been a strange one.

Ben was born of respectable English parents, had received a tolerable education, but possessed by the spirit of wandering, had first run away to sea, had then run away from his ship, while at a South American port, and after passing some time among the Gauchos, had come to Australia. Here, after many lawless adventures, he had risen to his present position, by his skill, reckless daring, and experience as stockman. He confessed, however, to his companion, that he still preferred wandering to remaining with one master, and that nothing but his obligations to Mr. Hughes could have retained him in his service.

Edward had before observed the deference which Ben paid to his master, and to him

alone, and always anxious to increase his knowledge of his father's character, he inquired what had been the conduct which called forth so much gratitude and attachment.

Ben told him that he had been connected with a gang of bushrangers, and with them had once attacked Mr. Hughes's station while he was absent from home. In admiration of some feats of horsemanship, of which he had been an accidental witness upon a former occasion, Ben had insisted upon sparing one of Mr. Hughes's finest horses, to the great displeasure of his comrades, but to his own advantage as it turned out, for the offenders being captured, nothing could be proved against him for want of Mr. Hughes's evidence; the rest of the gang would also have got off, had they not been convicted for other offences, in which Ben was luckily not concerned. As soon as the trial was ended, Ben repaired to Mr. Hughes to thank him for his forbearance, and

honestly acknowledging that bushranging did not pay, offered his services to him in any capacity for which he might be fitted. Mr. Hughes, pleased by the man's frankness, and amused by his confidence,—there might be some deeper cause for his welcome of a repentant criminal, but Ben knew it not,—received him at once into his service, where he had proved himself an invaluable though somewhat eccentric assistant.

All this Ben related to Edward with the most perfect candour, concealing nothing to his own disadvantage, but taking an indulgent view of his career, in which his listener was inclined to concur, while he learned with pleasure his father's share in the last mentioned transaction.

Daylight now began to dawn, and having reached the valley along which the adverse party must proceed, Ben turned his attention to selecting a good hiding-place from whence he could see without being seen. He found at length a spot, where the

valley was contracted, and a small but rocky stream which flowed down it bent its course to the side on which they stood, so as to confine those who might travel along its banks to a narrow space of level ground, the hill here rising abruptly, and affording a position from whence any advancing body might be easily and closely inspected.

The two companions were not sorry to stretch themselves upon the ground behind some convenient masses of rock, and among thick bushes, where, for a time, they waited without any symptoms of impatience.

When more than an hour had passed, however, Edward began to fear that his guide had been mistaken, and asked him if he was quite certain that M'Gregor could not have given them the slip, by taking a different road.

"Quite certain," answered Ben. "One thing is clear now, and that is, that he has no idea any one is on his track, or he would have been in a greater hurry this morning.

We shall have some good news to take back at all events."

Another interval elapsed, and Ben was beginning to doubt whether M'Gregor did not intend to take a whole day's rest, when a distant bellowing struck upon his ear, followed by a cracking of whips which echoed through the valley with a report like that of fire-arms, and then was heard the welcome sound of many hundred heavy trampling hoofs.

"Lie close, and use your eyes," whispered Ben eagerly, creeping a little forwarder to obtain a better view.

The whole body now came in sight. A noble black bull leading the way, followed by two or three hundred cattle which moved leisurely forward, under the superintendence of seven men on horseback.

As they came nearer, Ben whispered—

"Look at that man on the grey horse. It is M'Gregor himself, and a fine looking fellow he is. I know him well, and if we

beat him it will be a wonder, I can tell you. Look how fresh those cattle are, look how regularly they move on, there is not a foot-sore one to be seen. Anybody can tell that they have been driven with judgment, and there are few like him at this work, now your father has given up. If M'Gregor knew we were upon the line we might just go home again, but now that he thinks himself safe he will perhaps make short journeys and give us a chance. We must lose no time in rejoining our party."

M'Gregor had now turned a point of rock, and was out of sight. Edward was rising from his place of concealment when Ben hastily forced him back again.

"Hist!" he exclaimed, "we are not safe yet."

Two young men now came in sight with guns in their hands; they appeared to be watching some dogs which were hunting on the hill-side, and which, just as Ben had

finished speaking, put up a flight of quails not far from the rock behind which he lay. Both guns were instantly fired, and the shot rattled among the leaves round Edward's head like a hail-storm, though they were too much spent to do any harm.

"That was a good miss," said Ben coolly, observing with approbation that Edward remained quite unmoved.

"They have missed the birds, too," added he, "luckily for us, or we should have had them rather too close in picking up their spoils."

The dogs now dashed forward and discovery seemed inevitable, but luckily at this moment the sportsmen whistled, and urging on their horses, they, too, turned the point, and were soon out of sight. After waiting to make sure that there were no more stragglers, Ben rose, and looked cautiously round. Then, taking advantage of every inequality in the ground, he proceeded up the hill. Great care was neces-

sary to prevent their forms from becoming visible against the sky as they reached the highest point, but that once passed there was no longer any fear of discovery, and they had only to think of making the best of their way towards the Devil's Nick.

Ben pointed out to Edward the gap in the faint line of hills towards which they were bending their steps, and the distance looked to him somewhat appalling, but he had been a practised and sturdy pedestrian even in England, and he found that the purity and dryness of the atmosphere, together with the cool breeze which they owed to their elevated position, gave him fresh vigour, and enabled him to accomplish his task without any excessive fatigue.

It was four o'clock when they reached the Devil's Nick. Mr. Anderson, who, by great exertion had arrived there in time to give his men and animals a long rest, was about to begin the passage of the formidable gully.

Upon hearing Ben's report he looked a little grave, but in a few moments his sanguine disposition resumed its sway, and he was cheering on his men with the full confidence of victory.

Edward mounted his horse, determined to ride as far as the cat-like activity and practised wisdom of the animal made it possible. Mr. Anderson's orders were, not to hurry the cattle, but to keep them moving, and it was wonderful to see with what dexterity they made their way over huge fragments of rock, and along the crumbling slope of the steep bank; taking advantage of every ledge that afforded a firm foot-hold, and recovering themselves when it appeared as if they must inevitably fall.

Some few casualties occurred. Several of the men got falls, and more than once they were all summoned to haul up with ropes an unfortunate animal, when he had slipped to a place whence there was no moving backwards or forwards. One beast

was so seriously injured as to be condemned to a summary death, but beyond this, no misfortune occurred, and before night closed in, the troop were assembled in safety on a small patch of level ground on the other side of the dangerous ravine, and were making up for the labours of the day by food and refreshment.

"Now, Ben," said Mr. Anderson triumphantly, "which will you back, M'Gregor or me?"

"If M'Gregor was not a Scotchman—" answered Ben, "but those Scotchmen are the devil."

"Don't forget that I am Yorkshire, myself," returned Mr. Anderson laughing cheerfully.

"There's something in that," answered Ben with a grin, as he prepared to open his saddle-bags.

The next day's journey was over tolerably easy ground. The following brought our friends to the top of the last chain of hills.

Another long one, and they arrived at nightfall within easy reach of the river, which now alone remained between them and their coveted pasture ground. They could not pass it before dark. Just as the encampment was formed, Jack Anderson, who had ridden out alone in the morning to explore, came in with very important news.

He had met a body of natives travelling westwards, who gave him to understand in their strange jargon that there were white men not far off, at the same time displaying presents which they had received from them. It would seem that M'Gregor was not more, if so much as a day's journey in the rear, and, in the uncertainty, it was hardly safe to calculate even upon that.

"It is no time to hesitate," said Mr. Anderson decidedly, "sunrise must find us in possession. Go and get what rest you can, and as soon as the moon is up we will take twenty or thirty of the best cattle, and pass that river whatever happens."

"I took a look at the river, father," said Jack, "it is a formidable one, but I dare say if you don't mind drowning a beast or two that it may be forded."

Mr. Anderson gave his directions. All who were to form the night expedition retired to rest. As soon as it was pronounced light enough by the watch, the sleepers were awakened. The task of selecting the cattle was not difficult, the stockman knowing each individual and its merits with certainty, but there was some delay in compelling them to separate from their companions.

Upon reaching the banks of the river, the object was to force all to take to the water at once, that the pressure of the hindmost might overcome the repugnance of the foremost. This the cattle were most unwilling to do, fatigued as they were with the previous long day, and alarmed by the width and rapidity of the stream. An exercise of the lash, most unpleasant to

Edward's feelings, was required to force them forward, and it was only after persevering exertion that the terrified animals at last plunged into the water. The river was now alive with a black mass of struggling forms, each beast resting his head upon the hind quarter of that before him, and proceeding thus in a compact body. The moonlight glanced upon their horns, upon their wet sides, and the splashing waters; while the panting breath of so many swimming animals sounded far into the stillness of the night.

Mr. Anderson watched anxiously for the moment when the leading bull should reach the opposite shore; the bank was steep and not sound; everything depended upon his making a successful attempt to land. His nose now touched the water plants which clothed the river's edge, he strove to obtain a footing, but the ground gave way beneath him, again he tried, and again failed,—another frantic struggle, and then exhausted

he fell backward, and with a despairing bellow turned away. No other animal attempted that in which their leader had failed, but following him closely as before they also turned back, until he reached the hindermost and placed his head upon its croup, when forming themselves into a hollow ring, they swam round and round without any effort to land.

No sooner had Mr. Anderson seen what was likely to occur, than he plunged into the water, followed by his sons and servants. Unless the circle could be broken, it was well known that the animals would continue to swim round, until exhausted, when they would be swept away by the current and drowned.

The struggle was as singular as it was dangerous. At first the case seemed hopeless, but Edward in his zeal forgetting the better part of valour, attacked the old bull so resolutely as to excite his rage, and suddenly breaking from the rest, the infuriated ani-

mal dashed after him. Though a tolerable swimmer he was in great danger: he struck out with all his force; fortunately the current carried him towards a spot where landing was more practicable, and by a desperate effort he succeeded in reaching dry land, but the bull was close behind, and breathless as he was, his clothes heavy with wet, he was in no favourable condition for a trial of their respective speed. He had only just time to spring aside behind a tree, as the animal rushed by, unable to stop himself in his headlong career. In another moment he had turned, and came charging back again. Edward gave himself up for lost, when the sharp crack of a rifle rung upon his ear, and he saw his foe roll over and over tearing up the earth with his horns.

Edward could not tell whence this timely aid had come, for the remainder of the cattle, which upon the circle being broken had followed their usual leader to the new

landing place, were now pouring in, in a wild irregular stream. He joined the men in the rear, and suffering the animals to disperse themselves, certain that they would not wander far, all crowded round Mr. Anderson to wish him joy.

"Yorkshire for ever," shouted Ben, as he joined the group with his gun in his hand. "Yorkshire for ever! the canny Scot is no match for you."

"Where is Edward Hughes?" asked Mr. Anderson, "we owe our success mainly to him."

"Here I am, sir," said Edward coming forward.

"Ah, lad, you were very near not being able to make that answer," observed Ben; "old Cæsar did not understand a joke."

"It is you I have to thank for saving my life then, Ben?" said Edward, giving his hard fist a gripe that would have brought the tears into any one else's eyes. "I guessed that ready shot came from your

rifle, but how did you happen to have it in your hand so opportunely?"

"Why it is never very long out of my hand if I can help it," answered Ben with his usual grin. "I crossed the river before any of you, partly that I might leave it safe and dry on this side, partly that I might look out for a good landing place. But you were all too quick, and had taken to the water before I got back with my news, so I just waited a bit to see where I could be of most use, and luckily, had not quite made up my mind, when old Cæsar singled you out; knowing he was a savage when once roused, I had no great difficulty in deciding what it was best to do. If he had not been tired as well as you, I don't know that I should have been in time after all."

In spite of what had been done, Mr. Anderson was not yet satisfied. He had set his heart upon moving far enough up the river to be seen by his rival before

he attempted to ford it, that there might be no room for dispute as to which side had gained the victory. Accordingly they were soon again in motion, the indefatigable leader riding on in front, joking and laughing with as boyish spirits as the youngest of the company.

The distance was not great, and before midday the place was reached. Here at last all were allowed to rest. Horses were unsaddled, fires lighted, refreshments prepared, and the wearied cattle suffered to revel in the sweet untrodden grass. Mr. Anderson alone took no part in the universal relaxation, but mounting a small hillock, and drawing forth a pocket-glass, remained for some time motionless. At length his sons and Edward, who were watching him as they lay round their fire, observed him shut his glass, replace it in his pocket, rub his hands with intense glee, and come towards them with strides worthy of the far-famed seven league boots.

"Well, father," said Jack.

"I hope M'Gregor has a good glass," was the only answer, but the satisfaction which beamed over the broad face spoke volumes.

"Have you seen him? and how far off?"

"Not above five miles, they are trooping down that hill as calmly and contentedly as possible," answered Mr. Anderson with another hearty laugh.

The noonday meal was a joyous one round all the fires; the men were exhilarated by success, the accidents had been few, and the animals lost did not seem to affect their master's spirits any more than their own.

Mr. Anderson repeatedly used his glass to watch M'Gregor's party.

"They see us now," he said at last, "and they have halted. Upon my word I am sorry for them."

"It must be a great mortification," said

Edward, "and this man seems to have deserved success."

"It spoils the pleasure of winning that somebody must lose, I declare I feel quite vexed at my own good fortune. M'Gregor is riding on alone. Catch my horse, Jack, and I will go and meet him. You, boys, wait here till I come back."

The horse was brought, and Mr. Anderson mounted with a countenance from which all exultation was banished.

"I hope he will not think that I want to crow over him," he said, as he rode ruefully away.

"I do believe my father feels more pain than pleasure at this moment," said Jack, "he cannot bear to see any one disappointed."

"And yet he seemed more pleased than any one, an hour ago."

"Yes, that is just his way. No one so keen for victory, but the moment it is won he thinks only of the vanquished."

The party round the fire watched the

parley that took place between the rival leaders for some time with the glass, but wearied by the length to which it was prolonged, they ended by stretching themselves upon the ground, and were half asleep, when roused by the cheery loud voice of Mr. Anderson. He seemed as happy as ever, and quite satisfied with the result of his interview.

"M'Gregor looked very black," he said, "at first, and I hardly knew how to take him, especially when he asked how long I had been here, and learned that it was only about two hours since we arrived. 'I am very sorry,' I said, really, I could not help saying so, for I felt it, but he thought I was laughing at him. However we ended by becoming very good friends. I told him how the knowledge of our antagonist and of his fame had spurred us on, and he did not seem to dislike that."

"So you smoothed him down with soft words, eh, father?"

"I did not say a word more than was true, Jack, but the best of it is that he means to go on, and I think I have put him in the way of reaching pastures as good as these, though more distant. We shook hands at parting, and it's a weight off my mind."

A few days were employed in bringing up the remainder of the herd, in selecting a good place for a station, building a rough slab hut, and enclosing with strong palisades a yard for the stock. Two men, a stockman and his hut-keeper, were left in charge, and the rest of the company then returned home, accomplishing their journey without any adventures.

CHAPTER V.

Let us then be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate,
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait.

LONGFELLOW.

EDWARD on his return was welcomed with great tenderness by Mrs. Hughes, with chilling indifference by his father, and again he felt it impossible to express the feelings that had arisen naturally and warmly during his absence from home.

Mr. Hughes merely listened to the intelligence that the expedition had proved successful, and asked for no details, but when he had as usual retired from the supper-table, Edward and his mother conversed long together, and he related all his adven-

tures, not forgetting the attack of the bull.

"I believe that I owe my life to my father having sent Ben with me," he said raising his voice in the hope of being overheard. He was not quite sure whether he succeeded or not, but soon after his father rose to leave the room, and when near the door, stopped and asked—

"Did the horse carry you well?"

It was almost the first time that Edward had been addressed by him voluntarily, and he sprang forward with joy to answer in the warmest terms of praise.

"Then you had better keep him," said Mr. Hughes, hardly waiting to hear his son's reply; and closing the door instantly, he disappeared for the rest of the evening.

The next day when Edward saw his friend Ben, he came up to him, and said reproachfully— "This is almost too bad of you, Mr. Edward, you should never tell tales out of school."

"Why, Ben, what tales have I told, or have I had to tell?"

"About that bull, sir; surely you need never have mentioned such a trifle as that."

"It was no trifle to me; besides, what harm have I done?"

"Look here," said Ben, pulling a handful of bank-notes out of his pocket.

"Explain yourself," returned Edward, beginning to have some suspicion of what the man meant.

"Well, you see I always bring up my master's horse for him every morning, and generally he never speaks a word, or takes any more notice than if I was a post, but to-day, as soon as he was in the saddle, he leaned forward, reached out his hand, said, 'Ben, I am very grateful to you,' and was off like a shot. I stood staring even before I saw what he had put into my hand, and I can't think now what he meant unless it was about that bull."

Edward mused for a moment.

"Will you ask, Ben? I should like to know too?"

"Ask! bless your heart, sir, ask! I would sooner be set down among a hundred mad bulls empty-handed, than ask Mr. Hughes such a question."

"Well, it is not for me to say that my father's generosity is misplaced, whatever may be the cause of it. He certainly knew what you had done for me."

Ben continued turning the notes over and over in his hard brown hands, but at last he put them in his pocket, saying, "I am sure I am very much obliged to him, but I do wish he had just said the words, and nothing more."

Edward was sorely perplexed in his judgment of his father; he could not reconcile the evident value set upon his life, the liberality and consideration sometimes shown him in deeds, with the systematic coldness of manner that never for an instant relaxed, and never suffered him to make any approach to more filial intercourse.

Again and again he tried by every attention that he could think of, to break through the icy barrier; to this he was prompted by feelings of duty, affection and interest, but his opportunities were few, and his extreme sensitiveness continually stood in his way. At length, discouraged and wearied by repeated failures, he relapsed into his original state of resentful hopelessness, and ceased to make any efforts to win upon his father, while he withdrew himself as much as possible from his society.

To escape the constraint of home, and to distract the painful thoughts that pressed upon him, Edward now passed much of his time at Warragong. There he was always sure of a hearty welcome, and the excitement of cattle-hunting, horse-breaking and other native occupations and sports, in which he learned to take an active and willing part, served to beguile the time, and break the monotony of his life.

All liked him at Warragong; Mr. Anderson for his spirit and enterprise, the young men for his good-humour and dexterity, the children for his kindness in entering into their plans and amusements, while the old grandmother was loud in her praises for his deferential attention to her, and the mother, grateful to him for the notice he took of her children, was also interested by the look of melancholy that sometimes clouded his brow.

Welcome as he was to all, Jessy Anderson, the eldest girl, perhaps felt the most pleasure when the well-known gallop of his horse was heard. His gentleness and refinement were so different from anything to which she had been accustomed, especially when united to energy and spirit unsurpassed by those of her father or brothers, that she looked upon him as a being of a superior race, and admired him with her whole young heart.

Jessy was about sixteen, but looked older

than a girl of that age in England; she was tall, fair and slight, not remarkable for beauty, but very winning from the extreme simplicity and natural grace of her manner. Her spirits were as joyous as those of a child, but could be as suddenly checked. There was a great charm in the contrast between her usual gaiety and the sedate good sense that sometimes replaced it, a good sense brought to unusual maturity by the assistance constantly required of her by her mother in the management of a large family and establishment.

Edward liked her and all of them for their kindness to him, their straightforwardness, and above all, for the unconstrained and easy intercourse he held with them, doubly welcome as it was from the contrast presented by his own home.

His preoccupied heart, and Jessy Anderson's youth, had prevented him from entertaining other thoughts, and he was startled and pained beyond measure, by some ex-

pressions which his mother let fall after one of his frequent visits to Warragong.

These visits had been encouraged and promoted by her, to a degree which sometimes puzzled him, but which he attributed to her desire for his amusement. He now found that her views went much farther. In her excessive anxiety lest her son should leave her, and return to England, Mrs. Hughes had set her heart upon his marrying, and settling irrevocably in Australia. Jessy Anderson was the only girl whom she ever saw, and upon her she had fixed as the means of obtaining the fulfilment of her wishes, regardless of any difficulties which might be supposed to lie in the way.

Edward now regretted that he had allowed his mother to remain so long in ignorance of his engagement to Mary, and he lost no time in repairing the error, and giving her the whole history of its beginning and end.

He was listened to with much interest, and he found that the pleasure which he had promised himself in his mother's sympathy, was not greater than he now enjoyed. Many months had elapsed since Mary's name had passed his lips, or since he had seen any one who even knew of her existence, and the seal of silence once broken, he gladly let himself indulge in most lover-like rhapsodies.

For a time, his mother said no more of Jessy Anderson, but she did not encourage him to speak again of Mary, or of his return to England. When the impression made by his story had in some degree worn off, the plans which had previously possessed her reasserted their empire.

Mrs. Hughes had fully persuaded herself that Edward would never be able to fulfil his engagement, and she therefore decided that much the kindest thing towards him, was to wean him from the thought of it. In pursuance of this policy, she took every

opportunity of discouraging his hope of obtaining his father's confidence so as to become acquainted with his crime, and of receiving his permission to reveal it, even were the first step accomplished. She also pressed his visits at Warragong, and more than once adverted to the improbability, that Mary would continue to remember and think well of one who had left her in so strange a manner.

In all this, Mrs. Hughes, prompted by her strong maternal love and blinded by her feelings, was satisfied that she acted wisely, kindly, and conscientiously. It is hardly surprising, that the experience which she had had of her husband's gloomy reserve, should have made her regard Edward's hope as totally chimerical.

Her want of courage led her into another error. In the course of their conversations, Edward once asked her, if his father had been made acquainted with the history of his engagement; to this she had replied in the

affirmative, though her conscience smote her, as she remembered how little she had allowed her husband to suspect the strength of his son's attachment. To spare him, she had spoken of it as a youthful love-affair, and Mr. Hughes had not thought of it a second time. His silence on the subject, and his testifying no regret for the misery which the rupture of this engagement had caused, contributed greatly to increase the feelings of soreness and resentment which Edward entertained towards him, and Mrs. Hughes's first efforts to further her son's happiness were attended with an exactly contrary effect.

Edward found his situation daily more painful. He made no progress with his father: he had less pleasure in his mother's society, now that she had tried to destroy the hope to which he clung so fondly; he could no longer enjoy the peace and ease of Warragong, now that the fear of being misunderstood was suggested to him. His hope of returning to England was nearly

extinct. The mere knowledge that he required might indeed have been obtained from his mother, but his sense of honour was too fine to allow him to make an attempt, which a perception of the weakness of her character told him would be successful. Could he even have brought himself to act so unscrupulously, he would have made but one step, and that the least difficult, for he continued firm in his resolution, not to seek Mary's hand while anything remained to be concealed from her. He tried to console himself and to endure his present condition with patience, by the reflection that the knowledge and the permission that he sought, would probably both be useless during Mr. Hardy's life. "For," said he to himself, "a crime sufficient to expatriate my father, must be sufficient to make his consent unattainable. It is only from Mary, as her own mistress, that I have anything to hope. There is time yet, if she remains true to me."

If! it was the first time that an expression so nearly implying a doubt, had arisen in his mind. This was his mother's doing, and during the whole of his sorrow Edward had never felt so desponding, so utterly miserable as now.

Mr. Anderson had, more than once, tried to induce his young friend to begin a settler's life upon his own account, and had given him glowing pictures of the delight experienced by one who gradually subdues the wilderness by his own exertions, and sees the comforts and beauties of civilized life grow up around him, under the fostering influence of his own perseverance.

As there seemed to be no prospect of leaving Australia, Edward learned to think that he might as well follow this advice. It would please his mother, in spite of his objecting to marry as well as to settle. His father would be relieved from his constant presence, he himself would escape the insufferable constraint of his home. Although he felt,

at the moment, too spiritless to enter, with eagerness, into any plan, he was still glad to have the prospect of something to do, something to think about, a calling in life which he might, at any moment, abandon, but which would do as well as another, in case he should be doomed never to see England more.

He accordingly, one day, broached the subject to his mother. She was overjoyed, and promised him an unlimited command over his father's funds, and all that could facilitate the execution of his project.

She spoke as if everything was at once settled, congratulating herself upon having him fixed near her, and thanking him over and over again for giving up all thoughts of England.

Edward was a little annoyed at the rapidity of her conclusions; he did not like to be chained down instantly to what he had himself suggested, and, above all, he did not like that an ultimate return to England

should be so completely put out of the question.

"You do not suppose, mother," he said, "that I am going to sit down contentedly here, without making a struggle. You cannot wish it, or think it right, when you remember what I have left in my own country."

"I fancied that you had completely given up the idea of that marriage," answered Mrs. Hughes, in a disappointed tone: "did you not tell me that your engagement was quite broken off, and that Miss Hardy was to consider herself free?"

"I did."

"And yet, my dear boy, with all your good sense, you are wild enough to think that a person of her fortune, pressed on every side to marry, will remain single an indefinite number of years, with nothing to remind her that you are alive, much less that you may ever meet again."

"Mother, she loves me."

"I can easily believe it, my dear Edward; I do not question her loving you with all her heart, but absence you know,—and then women are so easily persuaded! If her father takes part against you, and tries to make her marry some one else, what is she to do?"

Edward thought, "Mary is very unlike my mother." He was too respectful to own quite how superior to her, and he only said, "I do not think that any one could talk Mary into doing what she did not think right."

"Oh, of course not; but they would make her think it right; and then, how is she to know that you have not forgotten her, and, perhaps, married yourself?"

"She would never doubt me," he said, with a feeling of humiliation, as he thought of the momentary cloud that passed over his own trust, while listening to his mother's words; "she would judge of others by herself."

Mrs. Hughes shook her head.

"You are very young and hopeful; a little time will show you how soon both youth and hope desert one."

"It matters not," answered Edward, with some impatience; "while we are both alive, I will not cease to strive for our re-union; I will live for that alone."

"You had better not have left England."

"Mother! could I marry with such a doubt upon my heart?"

"If you knew all, your marriage would be equally out of the question."

"Of that I might myself judge; Mary would overlook much for my sake."

"This is mere nonsense, Edward; your father will never give you permission to reveal his secret."

"Then, mother, do not hope that I will ever marry, here or elsewhere. I would no more deceive Jessy Anderson, and allow her to marry me in ignorance of who I really was, than I would Mary; so your favourite

scheme must fail on that ground, if on no other."

This declaration took Mrs. Hughes by surprise; such a difficulty had not occurred to her;—she changed her ground.

"But, dearest Edward, you are so impatient; wait a little yet, and your father will, perhaps, do all you wish."

"I have waited long enough, mother; it is time now to act."

"You would not speak to your father on that subject!" exclaimed Mrs. Hughes, in a terrified voice.

"Why not? it is the only way of coming to the point."

"Oh, Edward, you could not be so cruel! you cannot mean in earnest to give your father such pain!"

"He has given me pain enough," said Edward, bitterly; "I have a right to demand the only reparation in his power."

"A right!"

"Yes, mother, a right. I have not claimed

many of a son's privileges hitherto, and though kept at arm's length, I have never complained; but I owe it not only to myself, I owe it to Mary, not to suffer a false delicacy to keep me any longer in this state of unmanly supineness. I should be faithless to the trust reposed in me by my affianced wife, if I suffered your timid counsels any longer to prevail."

"My counsels are not timid, but I would have you remember the duty that you owe to a father."

"And is there duty on one side only?" replied Edward passionately: "am I to receive nothing in return for that I have already shown? I have not complained; I have submitted in silence to coldness and dislike; I have avoided every subject that might be distressing; I have never alluded in the most distant manner, to the happiness that, but for my father, I might be now enjoying; and what return have I met with? Has he even shown that he felt for my

sufferings? No, mother, it is time to think of what I owe to another: I will no longer submit to see myself and her doomed to a life-long misery, to spare the feelings of a father, who wastes no thought upon either of us."

Mrs. Hughes turned pale at Edward's vehemence. Her submission of thought and will had been for years so unbroken, that the bare idea of any one withstanding her husband struck her with terror.

"You frighten me, Edward, with your violence," she said; "if you speak so to your father, you will only make things worse."

"What can be worse?" answered Edward, gloomily.

"You wrong your father," continued Mrs. Hughes, "and yet you ought to understand him, your characters are so much alike. You are unjust in saying that he does not care for you,—if you knew but a thousandth part of what he has gone through, you would

not speak so cruelly. He did all he could to spare you. Did we not both stifle the strongest feelings of our nature to secure your happiness, and is it our fault that we were unsuccessful?"

"Forgive me, mother; remember how I too have been tried."

"You will not fulfil your hard-hearted determination?"

"Dearest mother, I must," said Edward, gently, but with firmness.

"But you will not be hasty, you will spare him as much as you can?"

Edward promised to be as tender, as patient, as considerate, as she wished, but he would not give up his resolution. He had some fear of his own capability to carry it through, but when once roused he did not easily give way, and he now only waited for an opportunity of being alone with his father.

It was not very long before such an opportunity presented itself.

CHAPTER VI.

Hollowness, weariness, and worst of all,
Self-scorn that pities not its own deep fall.
MRS. F. KEMBLE.

ONE morning at breakfast, Mr. Hughes announced that he was about to leave home for a few days, in order to visit an outlying cattle-station to which he had not been for some time. Edward instantly asked if his father would allow him to be of the party.

Mr. Hughes looked up with one of his sudden glances, and a flush as of pleasure passed over his face; but he merely answered "as you please," and then added, "your mother would, perhaps, prefer that you should remain with her."

This answer would have been enough to

daunt Edward at another time, but now he hastened to answer,

"Oh! no, my mother will not want me—unless you wish me to stay, sir.'

"I have no wish but that you should follow your own inclinations."

"Then I would rather accompany you,' answered Edward, boldly, and he was rewarded by another gleam of satisfaction upon his father's countenance, which cheered him, although it vanished as quickly as it came.

That afternoon Edward was in such unusually high spirits as to surprise his mother; he was full of excitement, and once more of hope: he busied himself eagerly in preparations for the next day's journey, helped everybody, and called forth Ben's amused remonstrances, at the energy with which he crammed everything that presented itself, into the bullock-waggon which was to convey supplies to the men at the distant station.

He scarcely noticed his mother's evident

alarm as to the result of this journey; but when he was about to mount his horse in the morning, she looked so anxious as to arrest his attention, and remaining behind for a moment, he said,

"Do not fear me, mother, I will be as gentle as you could be yourself. I will not forget your cautions, trust me."

"God bless you, my son! I do not doubt your heart, but your eager temper frightens me."

"I believe you think me very headstrong and violent, but you shall see how wrong you are," answered Edward gaily, as he sprang upon his horse, and waving his hand in farewell, dashed off after his father. His steed, partaking in its master's spirits, plunged and caracoled in a manner to require all his horsemanship; and when Edward, who was a beautiful rider, drew up in his place in the cavalcade, flushed and excited by the exercise, his countenance wearing the look of youthful animation; now so often wanting to

it, a father's eye might be pardoned for resting upon him with pride.

Perhaps the old man felt it so; for as by an involuntary impulse he half held out his hand, but quickly checking himself, rode on with his usual downcast look and abstracted demeanour.

It was long before either spoke.

A great fault in Edward's character had always been that of too much susceptibility to the influence of manner. No coldness, no change, however unintentional, escaped him; and although he was gradually subduing what he had learned to look upon as an unmanly weakness, he had not yet succeeded in emancipating himself, and during these first hours of silence he was tempted to repent of his undertaking.

He would have given the world for his father to address him; but at length he resolved to force him into conversation. Upon what subject? Every one that he thought of, seemed to bear too closely upon what he

as yet wished to avoid, his desire at present being only to place himself upon a more natural and easy footing with his father. He ended, however, as people who labour under the sort of sensitiveness that oppressed him generally do, by saying exactly what he had settled that it would be better not to say yet, for abruptly breaking silence, he asked,

"What, sir, do you propose should be my future career?"

Mr. Hughes seemed to be taken by surprise, and did not immediately answer; when he did speak, it was sternly.

"Why do you ask me? you are of age."

"But your wishes, sir?"

"I have no wishes."

"Your advice at least," persisted Edward, who always gathered courage when the ice was broken.

"I can give none without knowing what are your inclinations."

"My inclinations!" Edward repeated the

words indignantly, but checking himself, he only added, "I must do something. I cannot lead this sort of life much longer."

Such an expression of pain shot across his father's features, that Edward was for the moment sorry to have betrayed his feelings; but when in his very coldest, calmest tones, Mr. Hughes asked him if he proposed remaining in that country, he thought he must have been mistaken in the meaning that he had ascribed to his look, and stung by the question, he answered hastily:

"What alternative have I? Can I go back, unless—" his promise to his mother recurred to Edward's memory; he hesitated, "unless—I mean—I mean that it depends entirely upon you."

"I have no right to control your actions. Decide without reference to me."

"My mother—"

"Your mother would certainly wish you to stay. In any case you need be under no difficulty as to money."

Mr. Hughes seemed now to think that the conversation was ended, and he dropped back to give some directions to Ben, leaving Edward to ride on alone with bitter feelings burning in his bosom.

Money! this then was all that his father could imagine him to desire! all that he had a right to claim. Money, not confidence or affection. Money was offered to him, instead of permission to return to England. Money was to be full compensation for the loss of love and happiness with Mary. Edward resented this, as it seemed to him, heartless insult more than anything that had yet befallen him; he did not know that his father had no clue to his feelings.

Mr. Hughes was not in the least aware of having given his son offence; and when he again rode forward, it was with a countenance less clouded than usual. As if the fact of Edward's asking his advice had already brought them into closer contact, he seemed willing to converse, and addressed

him once or twice, but receiving unwilling answers, he shrunk back into his usual reserve, and tried no more.

Edward could not fail to perceive in the disappointed look, the depressed and mortified demeanour of his father, the pain that he had caused, and again his heart smote him; but he was too angry to listen to it. As his mother had said, their characters were much alike, and it was for this reason that the father and son failed to understand each other. The same pride, the same sensitiveness promoted by different and yet corresponding circumstances, the same reserve. the very similarity kept them asunder. Edward returned, however, to the subject of their previous conversation.

"As it appears that I must look to this country as my home," he said with a bitter emphasis upon the last word, "you will perhaps have the kindness to afford me the advantage of your experience in pointing out how I can best employ myself."

"You wish for constant occupation?"

"Incessant; this life is intolerable. I must find something that can drown thought."

"That is an occupation which I have sought for five-and-twenty years," said Mr. Hughes, in a low voice: "I have never found it."

"But your own is not uninteresting," returned Edward, a little softened.

"Much the contrary, for a young heart and a light one."

"That is but a poor recommendation; to such, what occupation is uninteresting?"

"Yours is a young heart, my son, and it is without the only burden which is intolerable," said Mr. Hughes, with solemnity.

Edward made no reply; his father went on. "You are young, you are unused to sorrow, you think it hard to bear. Oh, God! can anything be hard to bear while a man may yet stand erect before his fellows!"

Edward was touched by the deep dejection of these words; he spoke, his father did

not seem to hear he was sunk in such abstracted gloom, but as if pursuing the current of his thoughts said aloud—

"Thank God, you have formed no ties in England, and life may yet be tolerable to you here. I do not despair of your finding interest in the career of a settler."

"It is attended with great risk, is it not?" asked Edward, not knowing exactly what answer to make.

"You need not fear that," answered his father; "I have been successful enough to meet any losses that you may incur without difficulty."

"I am afraid you will think that I make a bad return for your generosity—"

"Do not misuse the word, there is no generosity without sacrifice. I make none."

"Your liberality, then, sir, if I still hesitate—"

"I understand you; you need say no more. You will not stoop to receive from me any obligation. I was mad to hope it."

"Indeed, you mistake me, sir," answered Edward earnestly; "you wrong me,—father, —to think I could entertain such a feeling. I am only grateful—"

"Do not speak of gratitude, boy," interrupted his father sternly, "gratitude from you to me! It is mockery. Take all you please, and I shall owe you gratitude. But it is enough. I do not know what folly possessed me, that I should dare to hope my load could ever be lightened."

"If you will only listen to me, father, if you will only let me show you how entirely you have misunderstood me;" but Edward appealed in vain. Mr. Hughes would not hear, he begged his son to leave him, and Edward was forced to obey.

Unsatisfactory as the issue of this conversation had been, Edward felt that he understood his father the better for it. He now saw in the deep sense of humiliation which Mr. Hughes had betrayed, the moving cause of that cold reserve which

had so much repelled him, and he was obliged to acknowledge that his own manner of meeting this coldness, and of avoiding his father, could hardly be interpreted by him to mean anything but scorn and repugnance. He felt that, instead of waiting to be sought, his right course would have been to make the first advances, and undaunted by ill-success to have seized every opportunity of removing by respectful attention the morbid and exaggerated feeling of disgrace, which his father had allowed to overpower him.

"Mother, mother!" he mentally exclaimed, "your timid counsels have indeed led me wrong; they have made me act with a cruelty that your heart would ache to think of."

Edward had been satisfied by his father's expressions, that, in spite of the conduct for which he now reproached himself, he need not fear to encounter any personal dislike, all which he had ascribed to

that motive being now clearly attributable to his own mistaken and faulty manner. But one thing more was necessary to soften his feelings completely, and when he remembered that his father had said, "Thank God you have no ties in England," on that point also he was satisfied. He saw that the fact of his engagement was unknown, and the indifference to all concerning Mary, which had closed Edward's heart against his father more than anything else, was accounted for and excused.

Relieved from so many doubts, once more full of compassion, even of respect for the proud spirit which could not brook disgrace, but writhed under it none the less for the lapse of years, Edward longed with all the ardour and impetuosity of his character, to repair the injustice of which he had been guilty, and to atone for the suffering which he had involuntarily caused. The difficulties which yet stood in his way, he felt to be in great measure of his own providing,

and disappointments, checks, repulses, were nothing more than he deserved.

Animated by these sentiments, and by more real affection than he had yet felt, he devoted himself to his father with an earnestness that could not fail to make some impression. It was impossible to resist the winning tenderness and deference which these new feelings imparted to his manner; encouraged by partial success he redoubled his efforts; the excitement of exertion gave him fresh courage, and as he gradually ventured to give a freer course to his natural warmth and enthusiasm, his father seemed to take pleasure in listening to him, and at last, would sometimes lead him on, to express himself with even greater freedom.

These happy moments, however, did not occur very frequently. Mr. Hughes was only occasionally betrayed into conversing with his son upon equal and easy terms, and then, as if determined upon principle, to

deny himself the enjoyment he might find in the exercise of his paternal affections, he would wrap himself up in tenfold gloom, and seem to do penance for his momentary cessation from suffering.

Edward learned not to be disappointed when it appeared as if he had made no progress, and must again begin at the beginning. He was satisfied that he had gained ground, and only intent for the present upon lessening his father's misery, he did not, for the furtherance of his own interests, attempt to return to subjects which must be necessarily painful.

Occupied and interested by the pursuit of this object the journey did not appear long. They were approaching the end of the last day's march, and in order to reach the plains, where already might be discerned numerous herds of cattle, the track led in a zig-zag manner down a precipitous declivity, such as Edward had never seen attempted by anything upon wheels. He, however, was

the only person to whom this undertaking seemed at all surprising. The men, halting at the highest point, began to make arrangements for the descent, with a readiness that bespoke experience. The wheels were locked and secured to trunks of trees felled for the purpose, and strong ropes were attached to the hinder part of the vehicle, that human strength and skill might be brought to aid in the perilous business of holding back. With these precautions one waggon was lowered in safety. The second not being quite so heavy, did not appear to require the same care.

Edward stood with Ben upon a point from which they could command the whole descent, and was watching the progress of the operation, when suddenly at one of the sharpest turns, some of the fastenings gave way; the ropes, which the men held carelessly, were jerked out of their hands, and the whole weight coming suddenly upon the oxen, they were overpowered, and forced on

at a speed which rapidly increased as the impetus became greater. It was evident that they must shortly be thrown down, run over, and crushed by the waggon.

Nothing could be done to avert the impending disaster; and indeed, before any one could reach the spot, the ponderous machine came thundering along and rolled over with a tremendous crash, its contents being scattered far and wide.

In striving to lift the waggon off the bodies of the shaft oxen, a work which severely tasked the united strength of all the company, Edward strained his arm severely enough to force him to give up all further exertion. He thought nothing of the injury himself, but he was surprised at the anxiety testified by his father's looks.

And now began the long and wearisome operation of collecting and repacking the numerous articles that lay scattered around. Many it was impossible to recover. Tea and sugar strewed the sides of the precipice,

casks of flour and gunpowder had in some cases burst and mingled their contents; cheeses had taken advantage of their liberation to effect a rapid descent and to secrete themselves among the grass and bushes; articles of clothing hung upon every bough.

The last were easily recovered, and a little perseverance reduced the damage incurred by the rest, within much smaller limits than could have been anticipated at the first moment.

The procession was soon again in motion, and hurrying on to make up for lost time. Edward's arm gave him some pain, but he would gladly have suffered ten times more, to win one of the anxious glances his father frequently cast upon him.

When they arrived at the station and Mr. Hughes was satisfied that his son's accident was not likely to lead to anything of a serious nature, he relapsed into a state of abstraction, and was even more silent

than usual. Edward had learned to understand that this reaction always followed upon any unusual emotion of either pleasure or pain.

Mr. Hughes spoke to the shepherd in charge of the station, transacted the necessary business, gave the necessary orders, in brief but clear words, and then retired to rest, the only evidence of the feeling with which he regarded his son, being a low "God bless you" as they parted.

They were to pass the night in a new wooden hut, which, although unfinished, was preferable to that inhabited by the shepherds, nor by them alone. The common resource of filling a hut by sheep occasionally, not being so effectual in removing unwelcome guests as to make a night passed within such filthy precincts, a period of any thing but painful unrest.

There were two apartments in the unfinished dwelling allotted to Mr. Hughes and his son; each took possession of one,

and spreading their blankets and skins upon the rough sleeping places they retired, leaving the rest of the party to sleep round the fires, or to be accommodated at a little distance in the shepherd's bark hovel.

It was long before Edward fell asleep. His arm throbbed, and thoughts crowded to his mind as he rolled restlessly upon his couch. At last he dropped into a feverish slumber from which he was awakened by some one moving near him, and starting up, he saw by the light of the bright moon which streamed through the unglazed windows, his father bending over him with an expression of the most anxious solicitude.

In answer to his exclamation of surprise, Mr. Hughes merely said that he came to see if he was asleep, and quickly withdrew. The carelessness of the words assorted ill with the tone in which they were spoken, and Edward lay for some time thinking over all his intercourse with his father; every feeling was now merged in tender-

ness, which the uncertainty and mystery still existing between them served only to strengthen; he longed passionately to break through the remaining constraint, and to be to him all that son ever was to father.

Again he fell asleep and again he was awakened by some sound. It appeared to come from the adjoining room. He listened, but could hear nothing except the beating of his own heart: he had just satisfied himself that his imagination was playing tricks, when the measured tread of footsteps pacing backwards and forwards fell upon his ear, followed by a low groan as of extreme mental or bodily anguish.

He sprang up, his first impression being that his father was ill, but a moment's reflection made him pause before entering his room. If the sound was wrung forth by mental suffering would not his intrusion be most unwelcome?

All was again still, and he slowly returned to his bed, but scarcely had he lain

down when the moan was repeated. He could no longer hesitate, and rising and hastily putting on his clothes, he gently opened his father's door. For a moment he stood in silent awe. His father was kneeling by the side of the rudely constructed bed, his face buried in his hands, his whole frame convulsed with the agony of his mind.

Edward advanced timidly and reverently; then kneeling unobserved by his father's side, he prayed with his whole soul that he might be permitted to minister comfort to his suffering spirit.

"Father," he said gently.

His father started at hearing a voice so near him.

"Father, why should we both grieve in secret? Why should we not help to bear each other's burden?"

His spoke not, but would have turned away. Edward held his hand.

"Do not turn from me, father! forgive

me—Oh! forgive me if I have added sorrow to a cup already full; but do not turn away from me!"

"Forgive you, Edward!" his father said in a broken voice; "it is for you to forgive."

"Do not say so, father! do not think so. Oh! that you would believe in all the love and tenderness I long to show you!"

"Boy, it is impossible! You mock me with such words. It is no more in your power to forgive, than it is in mine to forget."

"I would that one were as easy as the other," said Edward, with earnestness.

"No, no, no!" exclaimed his father, passionately, rising to his feet: "I say it is impossible;" and then with startling vehemence he broke forth: "I have lived under a curse, and I have bequeathed it to my son. Dishonour has branded me, and will cleave to my seed from generation to generation. In vain I strove against the decrees

of Providence—in vain I stifled the voice of Nature—in vain I inflicted life-long torments upon a mother's heart, hugging myself with the thought that my son would be an honoured and respected man—uninjured by a father's blasted reputation—happy in the ignorance of his tainted blood. In vain! in vain! The arm of God will not be turned from its just vengeance; the sins of the fathers must be visited upon the children, and without this last worst agony, my punishment had not been greater than I could bear!"

Exhausted by the violence of his emotion he sunk upon the bed. It was as if the pent-up feelings, suddenly bursting forth, had rent asunder the heart that had so long imprisoned them.

Edward awe-struck at the depth of misery thus suddenly revealed to him, sought by every means in his power to restore his father to composure; he assured him of his respect, his affection, his joy at being

no longer an orphan, his belief in the happiness that his parent's love would confer upon him. All was fruitless; the stream of sorrow could not now be stopped.

"I tried to close my heart against you," said Mr. Hughes, when he could speak; "having injured you once, I would have persevered, to spare myself the pain of loving you, but this labour was also vain. You are fully avenged; you have heaped coals of fire upon my head. I cannot hate the son, whose eye I dare not meet; before whom I stand, miserable, abject, self-condemned, self-scorned. Oh! Edward, Edward, if you knew all, I think even contempt could not drown pity in your breast."

"Father, you cannot guess the pain you give me! what fault is there, for which such repentance would not atone? and can you think your son so severe a judge! Why dwell so much upon the dread of scorn? you are respected and loved in your adopted country; no one here holds a

higher position in men's eyes than you do!"

"They do not know, Edward, they do not know! I live a lie. There is not one of those who now seek me, that would not shrink back from my side, as from a plague-stricken wretch, were the truth laid bare before him. I know this! I feel this! and think you that there is comfort in respect so gained? respect, whose every token forces upon you the remembrance that you are a cowardly impostor; respect that you swindle from the world, by the meanest and paltriest deception. Can I sit with honest men, and not say within myself, I have no right here! Can I pass a miserable gang of chained convicts, and not feel that there is my place! You know not what it is—God forbid that you ever should know what it is, to live as I have lived; to have the fear of being found out ever hanging over you; to have a secret weighing upon your soul;

the consciousness of sin within your heart, never leaving you, sitting with you by your fireside, haunting your pillow by night, following you into the fresh air of the morning, flitting past you in the shadows of the moonlight; the heavens as brass above your head, the earth as iron beneath your feet! Of a truth God is a God of vengeance, his rod is a rod of iron; but what am I, that I should dare to cry against him!"

Edward in a low voice repeated the words, "Our God is full of compassion, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy."

"But not for me, not for me."

"For all who turn unto our Lord, who will have mercy; unto our God, who will abundantly pardon," said Edward, solemnly.

"Thousands of times have I read and reread the blessed promises, but they do not reach my soul. The denunciations of vengeance alone seem made for me!"

Edward was unused to speak of his own

religious feelings; he was ignorant of the extent of his father's guilt, and of how far his self-condemnation was just, how far it was owing to exaggerated remorse, but he could not refrain from an attempt to console and support the miserable man before him, by a more just and encouraging view of the gospel promises. In this, his increased knowledge of the Sacred Book assisted him, and resolutely casting aside the diffidence which first beset him, he spoke with the boldness and authority of conviction. His father listened in silence, but when Edward, more and more inspired by the solemn beauty of his subject, poured forth the holy truths which have carried joy to so many sinking hearts, dwelt upon the happiness of perfect trust, the unutterable peace of casting oneself wholly upon the mercy of Him, who is not extreme to mark what is done amiss, and who knoweth all our infirmities—the old man seemed to hang upon his words, and his countenance lost

its wild and agonized expression, while large tears gathered in his eyes, and rolled slowly down his sunken cheeks.

He held Edward's hand within his own, it was as if he had found a protector, and feared that the new hope which dawned upon him should be snatched away.

When he seemed to be calmed, and soothed, his son persuaded him to lie down, in the hope that he might get some rest.

"You must not leave me," he answered feebly, and Edward did not. He sat by the bedside without moving, his father's eyes turning anxiously ever and anon towards him, to make sure that he was not gone, even while he still clasped his hand.

When Mr. Hughes at length fell asleep, the first faint rays of dawn were shining upon his pale face and silvery hair, while Edward sat in mournful rumination upon the dreadful suffering which had reduced to such a wreck, the form that lay stretched upon the couch before him.

Exhausted though he was, Mr. Hughes's slumbers were of short duration. He was accustomed to rise early, and was on horseback soon after daylight. Edward, in spite of his disabled arm and want of rest, would not be prevented from accompanying him, and they rode out together to begin the business which had brought them to the station, and which consisted chiefly in examining and counting the herds which stocked the run.

Edward had often noticed with surprise the complete command which his father could exercise over himself, and the success with which he could banish from voice, look and manner, every trace of emotion. This morning, however, there was a wandering in his eye, a tremulousness in his voice, a want of his usual clearness and vigour, which betrayed the severity of the last night's struggle. This change did not escape the notice of the herdsmen, who complained to Ben of the little attention that

their complaints met with, and of the little approbation that their care and good conduct had procured for them. Ben shook his head wisely, spoke of the accident of the previous day, but was, in fact, as much at a loss as anybody.

During the journey homewards, Mr. Hughes never reverted to what had passed between him and his son, but seemed to cling to him, and lean upon him for support and affection, in a manner that went straight to Edward's heart.

When they reached home, Mrs. Hughes came out joyfully to receive them, and Edward answered her looks of anxious inquiry by such a satisfied expression of countenance, as made her feel sure that all must have gone well.

The evening meal passed cheerfully; Mr. Hughes, stimulated by Edward's happy look and his wife's evident joy at his return, exerted himself as he had never done before to cast aside his gloom and silence. He

joined in the conversation sometimes with apparent pleasure, and Mrs. Hughes's voice trembled as she bade her son good night, and whispered, "I owe this happy evening to you, Edward; God bless you for it."

CHAPTER VII.

A sacred burthen is this life ye bear,
Look on it, lift it, bear it solemnly;
Stand up, and walk beneath it steadfastly;
Fail not for sorrow, falter not for sin,
But onward, upward, till the goal ye win.

MRS. F. KEMBLE.

MR. HUGHES and his son were now inseparable.

It was touching to mark Edward's deference, his almost reverential manner to his father, the delicate tact with which he avoided anything that might lead to painful suggestions, the willing devotion with which he refused all that might prevent his remaining constantly at his father's side. Nor was it less touching to mark the change that had taken place in the old man, the gentle manner which had replaced his stern

coldness, the evident pleasure with which he received attentions formerly repelled with suspicious humility. His frame seemed to grow erect, his eye to regain its lustre, as he looked proudly upon his son, listened to his eager suggestions, or smiled at his youthful enthusiasm.

Mrs. Hughes had observed the alteration in her husband's manner with extreme astonishment. Edward's boldness seemed to her almost incredible, and she often watched timidly for what would follow, when she heard him address his father fearlessly, and saw him venture even into his own private room without having asked permission. Had she been less single-hearted, and less devoted, an emotion of jealousy and of mortification might have arisen in her breast, at seeing Edward occupy a position to which she had never attained, a position which years of devotion had failed to win for her, and to which he had leaped as it were at one bound.

Edward and his father seemed now all in all to each other, and Mrs. Hughes's society was less sought by her son. He still loved her as dearly as ever, and would not willingly have neglected her for a moment, but his time and interest were engrossed by his father. In his larger and more cultivated mind, he found the companionship he had long sighed for, and which his mother was quite incapable of affording him. And yet Mrs. Hughes was not hurt; she was so humble, so unselfish, that the satisfied looks of her son, and the less clouded brow of her husband more than repaid her for any individual sacrifice she might make.

Thus time rolled on, and in spite of the footing upon which Edward was with his father, he had learned nothing positive respecting the cause of his expatriation. Mr. Hughes was kind and confidential upon all other points, upon this he preserved a rigid silence; he spoke frequently on religious topics with Edward, and seemed to

find pleasure in his reasonings, but he spoke generally, never as referring to his own case, and Edward, who at first had forgotten himself and his object in sympathy for his father's sorrow, refrained now with scrupulous delicacy from making use of the power which his father's affection put into his hands.

It was Mr. Hughes himself who at last broke through this reserve.

He had read the service one Sunday to his assembled neighbours, and with more than his usual energy; indeed for some time past Edward had fancied that he could detect a tone of deeper feeling in the performance of this weekly duty; he had then as usual, withdrawn to his own room. Edward, who followed him, finding him disinclined for conversation, took up a book which lay upon the table, and strolled forth into the most shady and sequestered part of the garden.

He did not read much, but, suffering the

book to lie upon the grass by his side, he fell into a fit of musing. The book had opened at the title page, and happening after some time to look at it, his eye was caught by marks upon the fly-leaf, which showed that a name written upon it had been carefully erased. He took up the book, and examining more closely, perceived that a coat of arms had been affixed to the inside of the cover, and was yet faintly visible through the paper which was pasted over to hide it.

He had been now so long accustomed to hear his father called Hughes, that he had ceased to think of it as an assumed name; he had also forgotten to wonder at hearing his mother sometimes address her husband as Walter, although he always signed his name David.

His curiosity was now awakened afresh, and he remained with the book open in his hand, occupied with the various speculations which arose in his mind.

A slight noise made him look up, and he

saw his father standing by, watching him with a melancholy look of interest. Edward sprang up; their eyes met, and each understood what was in the thoughts of the other.

Mr. Hughes sighed deeply.

"I came to ask you to walk with me," he said; "I shall be glad of your arm in climbing the opposite hill."

Silently they proceeded in the direction mentioned, and but little passed before they reached the summit. Mr. Hughes was no longer so active as he had been, and he sat down upon the ground to recover from the exertion he had made.

From their high position the whole of the settlement was visible, and Edward, surveying the extent of cultivated ground, the numerous buildings, the thriving plantations, the herds of cattle, and the flocks of sheep, scattered upon the hill-sides, or drawing homewards for the night, was impressed by the air of peace, prosperity, and riches, which

overspread the scene, and speaking his thoughts aloud, exclaimed:—

"And this is all your work, father; the work of one man. It is, indeed, a proud thing to have redeemed all this from the wilderness, to have made corn to grow, and men to dwell, where nothing once lived but the emu and the kangaroo."

"Is it a proud thing to have forfeited the inheritance of my fathers?" said Mr. Hughes, in a low voice: "is it a proud thing to have my very name blotted out from the land they dwelt in? But let that pass; what is done cannot be undone. You seem to have a high opinion of the utility of a settler's life; why do you not embark in it? You know, Edward, that you have but to tell me what you wish."

Edward gazed round him. All looked so beautiful, so peaceful, seen through the pure buoyant atmosphere, in the glowing sunlight.

"I could be very happy here—if—I am

sure we could be happy here," he said, more to himself than to his father.

Mr. Hughes resumed :—

"All this will soon be yours; but if you prefer the rough life, and interest of a pioneer—"

"I should not hesitate one moment, my dear father, but for the ties which bind me to England."

"Is your patriotism so strong? think, that by extending the dominion of your country you are still serving her."

"It is not patriotism; though I love my native soil, I could learn to love my father's home better: but I have other ties; surely, father, you know of what I speak—did not my mother tell you?"

"Your mother told me of nothing but some engagement that was at an end. A boyish love affair, was it not?"

"So far boyish, that it began while I was yet a boy, but it grew with my growth, and strengthened with my strength, until it be-

came the ruling passion of my youth, the guiding principle of my manhood."

"And she you loved was worthy of you?"

"Do not ask me that," said Edward, turning hastily away.

"Did she love you? had you hope?"

"In four days we should have been man and wife," Edward forced himself to answer calmly, but his voice shook with suppressed feeling.

His father turned to him suddenly.

"Edward, you love her still."

"With all my heart, soul, and existence; with more passion, more entire devotion, than on the day I left her; I love, I reverence, I worship her," exclaimed Edward, passionately.

"And this also is the work of my hands," murmured Mr. Hughes, as his head sank upon his breast: "Oh, my God, thy judgments are very terrible!"

Edward feared to speak; he could not

deny that his father had been the cause of all his grief.

"Why did you not tell me this before?" asked Mr. Hughes, at length.

"For some time I thought you knew it, dearest father, and then I did not like to give you more pain; I have given you enough already."

"Tell me the whole now; I have been a selfish coward long enough."

Edward obeyed. His father was deeply affected at his recital.

"You acted nobly towards me, Edward, far more nobly than your wretched father can ever deserve. But to what danger have you exposed your fair name? what suffering have you inflicted upon your bride? alas, alas! that I should have this also upon my head. Dare you hope that your Mary will yet believe you guiltless?"

"She loves me," was Edward's only answer.

"And you have no fear?"

"None, except that of seeing her no more. I will not see her, unless I can claim her promise; and I will not claim her promise, unless I can lay every fact unreservedly before her. The decision must then rest with her."

"There is no other course for a man of honour," said Mr. Hughes; "but if this were done—if your Mary knew of what an outcast you were the son—dare you yet hope that she would marry you?"

"I think—I feel that she would."

"If, for your birth's sake, the world looked coldly on you, dare you hope that she would not repent the step that bound her to you?"

"I do."

"But you would repent—you would reproach yourself—you would imagine that she suffered in silence."

"I do not think so, father."

"You believe that nothing could alter her feelings towards you?"

"Nothing but my own misconduct."

The agitation of Mr. Hughes increased at every word.

"Your love will be sufficient for her happiness?"

"Yes."

"Even though the world abandon you?"

"Yes."

"Even though by such a marriage she must call a felon father?"

"Yes," answered Edward, firmly, "call me presumptuous, infatuated, mad, if you will; I have such confidence in Mary's love, that I believe no change of outer life can shake it; undeserving as I am, she has placed her happiness in my keeping, and while I remain the same, she will not change."

"This you believe upon your soul?"

"Upon my soul," he said solemnly.

"Edward, the priceless treasure of such a woman's love must not be thrown away to spare the feelings of a sinful old man. You must return to her, you must tell her

that he who caused your misery has made the only sacrifice in his power in order to put an end to it. You shall know all, you shall be free to use your knowledge as you please; I shall be repaid if I live to hear that you are happy."

"Oh father, my heart bleeds for you; is there no way but this?"

"None, and I must lose you—Edward you must go, this is the hardest trial, the first parting with you was nothing, for then I did not know the blessing of a son's love, but now, now that you are my rod and my staff, the crown of my old age, how shall I live without you? Edward, my dear, dear son," he stopped and then slowly added, as if the words were wrung from him; "but what has he to do with a father's happiness, who brought his own father to an untimely and dishonoured grave?"

After a pause, which Edward did not venture to interrupt, Mr. Hughes resumed.

"You have not yet heard the history of

that which made me what I am, you shall hear it now."

"Not now, dear father; you cannot bear it; spare yourself."

"Yes, now; I can do it, and I will. Sit down, and listen; when I have ended look kindly on me if you can."

And with a stern rigid composure, as of a man who hardens himself to undergo some fearful operation without flinching, he began.

"My father was heir to an ancient name and noble property in one of the western counties of England. A prouder man never lived, and he had a right to be proud, if ever man had. No one was more looked up to, for his lofty principles and uncompromising character; you might see in his bearing that he was of a different mould from other men. I was his only child, indulged, spoiled by every one but him; he treated me with kindness, but with a dignity and reserve that made me confide in others,

never in him. Why do I seek to excuse myself? the fault was mine, not his. I was clever, successful, flattered by women, courted by men; I became intoxicated with vanity. I had enough of my father in me to be preserved from gross vice, but I plunged into every kind of extravagance. Even yet there were the seeds of better things within me, and I might have become, I will not say a great or good man, but something widely different from what I am. My debts grew heavy, I applied to my father for money, he sent me some, but he had never owed a shilling in his life, and he told me so. I vowed within myself that I would never apply to him again. This would have been well had I ceased to spend; and for a time I did so, but old habits resumed their sway. In addition, I had the selfish cruelty to persuade your mother to marry me, against the will of both our parents. Our difficulties became fearful, creditors pressed clamorously as they saw

that we had no prospect of receiving money; they knew that my father's property was not entailed, they knew that he had threatened to disinherit me, they knew his unbending character. In my mistaken pride I would neither ask for his forgiveness nor his help; had I done so, I have reason to believe that I should not have asked in vain; but I was as one possessed by an evil spirit, I tried the gaming-table; at first I won, as all do; I embarked in speculations, all promised success, and we enjoyed a period of prosperity and sunshine. At this time I lived much with an uncle, who, being on bad terms with my father, had stood by me in my disobedience. He did not know of my wild speculations, and when he died he left me sole guardian of his daughter and her fortune. Can you bear to know what followed? My speculations failed; then came a fearful crash. We had two children, they both died; grief, confusion, disappointment, remorse, despair,

turned my brain, I became fearfully ill—for some days I knew nothing. Upon recovering consciousness I found nearly all our furniture gone, an execution threatened, my wife broken-hearted at the loss of her children, weak and suffering, in hourly expectation of her confinement. At this juncture, the agent who had managed for me and had always lured me on to fresh speculations, entered the room. He spoke kindly and feelingly of our situation, but impressed upon me fully its hopelessness. Weak as I was, I grew half wild, as he methodically placed before me the extent of my liabilities, and went on from point to point destroying hope and heaping up misery. There was but one way, he said, of escaping, one speculation in which he was also embarked, which might—indeed which must—by a timely application of capital, prove so successful as to retrieve my fortunes. He suggested an appeal to my father, I refused. He

insisted still more upon the certainty of success—in fact it was a safe investment—my cousin's fortune would be doubled by it—"

Mr. Hughes stopped and gasped for breath, his face was deadly white and large drops stood upon his brow.

"You anticipate the end. I try sometimes to believe that I was not sane at the moment. Had I been myself—but what matters it? The deed was mine. I could not stoop to ask my father's pardon, but I stooped to treachery—I stooped to dishonour; I betrayed the orphan entrusted to my care! There is little more to tell. The final blow came, and all was lost. Success could not have made me unconscious of my crime, failure hardly made me more miserable, but it brought the consequences of my sin home to me with fearful reality. I will not dwell upon details. My cousin was too young to understand her position. I had been her sole guardian, and her father

was a man of such irregular life, that no one knew what he had left her; no one was acquainted with my guilt but the partner of it, and he would be silent for his own sake. A sudden thought struck me by which I might save my name from dishonour, and atone in some degree for my conduct. My cousin was next heir to myself. If I was removed, I knew that my father would leave everything to her. I will not dwell upon the means by which I escaped my creditors, placed you, an infant, with Mr. Winstead my only confidant, fled the country with my devoted, patient, uncomplaining wife, and caused it to be reported that we had all perished together in a ship that was lost about that time.

"There was no sacrifice in what I did—all places were alike to me, and the wound I bore within me would have made my father's home intolerable; but your mother, —Edward, you must repay her, I never can. My father did not live long; he never held

up his head after my supposed death, and if ever man died of a broken heart, he did. Had he known all, the grave itself had hardly brought him rest. The only gleam of joy that fell across my path for years and years, was when I heard from Mr. Winstead of my cousin's prosperity, of her happy marriage, her thriving family; then for a moment I would hope that I had atoned for my sin. If remorse and bitter suffering, if repentance can avail, surely I may hope. Is there not joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. Pray for me, my son, pray for me, and pity even while you despise me."

"Oh, father, who would dare to say that tempted as you were, he could have stood firm. How many would have fallen like you, how few would have made such an atonement?"

"You have suffered, Edward, by both; but you would not wish me to have acted differently."

"Not for worlds. Now I can honour as well as love you."

His father laid his hands upon Edward's head, and said solemnly.

"If I may yet pray for the guiltless, I pray for you, that you may never seek to stand in your own strength. No human principle of pride or honour will bear the fiery ordeal of temptation. As auxiliaries they may be good, but trust to God alone in the day of battle. I thought that my pride would keep me from all dishonour; on what a broken reed did I lean! It is but lately that I have been fully aware of my own blindness,—of how much the dishonour weighed upon me —how little the sin! I can confess it to you now, Edward, a proud false feeling has embittered my repentance, I have been humiliated rather than humbled; I see it now, and I see the suffering it has caused to others. I trust my mind is in a more Christian state."

He spoke earnestly, humbly, and with

deep contrition; Edward listened in silent respect.

"You can now judge," said Mr. Hughes, after an interval of silence, "what will be your prospects in returning to England. My secret is in your hands. My former name is alone untold, and that I never will reveal. I will not put it in the power of any of my descendants to raise a claim to the property that I have forfeited. I may be wrong, but I shall not change."

"My prospects are brighter than I had ever hoped to see them. With Mary, I have nothing to fear."

"And her father?"

Edward hesitated. He could not forget the difficulty with which Mr. Hardy's consent had been obtained originally, and might he not doubt the story for which no evidence could be adduced but Edward's single word.

"From him you anticipate opposition?" asked Mr. Hughes.

"I fear so."

"Be that as it may, you must lose no time in returning to England; you have no right to delay; your first duty is towards your betrothed."

"It grieves me to think of leaving you."

"Do not think of me. There can be no joy for me like that of hearing of your happiness; but I dread to think of your mother's suffering. I have caused her enough already. You do not know what she has gone through during these long years. I look back with shame upon my conduct, when I see how much I have been ruled by mortified feeling, by wounded pride, by disappointment, bitterness, and vain repinings, how little by true and humble penitence; I might have spared her much. She has suffered by my sin, and she has suffered by my atonement. Pride has made my best actions worthless; it has stained me everywhere. There was pride in my self-abasement, there was pride in my silence, pride in

my self-condemnation, pride even in my self-contempt. By all and in all has your mother suffered! and now she is to lose you once more."

Slowly and sadly Mr. Hughes rose, and taking his son's arm, they returned homewards in deep thought.

CHAPTER VIII.

What shall I do with all the days and hours
  That must be counted ere I see thy face,
How shall I charm the interval that low'rs
  Between this time and that sweet time of grace?

For thee, I will arouse my thoughts to try
  All heavenward flights, all high and holy strains,
For thy dear sake I will walk patiently
  Through these long hours, nor call their minutes pains.

MRS. F. KEMBLE.

EDWARD had at length attained his object. The secret was now his own, and he might make what use of it he would. This in itself was much, but he had cause for a yet deeper joy.

He had in imagination dwelt so long upon his father's crime, adopting and rejecting so many suppositions to account for his exile and remorse, that he had al-

most dreaded to learn the truth lest he should find his worst anticipations realized. The knowledge of what had actually occurred, comforted and relieved him beyond measure. He could not deny that his father's early life had been full of faults; he saw and acknowledged the erroneous principles on which he had acted; he did not extenuate the last fatal deed, nor was he blind to the mistaken feelings which had embittered his subsequent repentance. Amid all, however, he thought he could discover the elements of a noble nature; in every fault he fancied he could trace what, if rightly governed, would have produced a fine character. His father's abandonment of country, name, and fortune, corresponded so curiously with his own course, and he sympathized so completely in the impetuous spirit of self-sacrifice that led to it, that to this part of his conduct he, perhaps, did more than justice. Be that as it may, he looked forward to the moment when Mary should

listen to his story, without any emotions of shame, or any fear that she would receive him coldly for his father's sake.

Difficulties there yet remained to overcome, but what were they to the grand obstacle which was now removed from his path. Should Mr. Hardy's opposition cease but with his life, he might still look forward with confidence, to the time when Mary should be free to follow the impulses of her heart, and he had no fear now as to what those impulses would be.

What are time and space to a lover's imagination? Edward was once more in fancy bounding along the pathway so often traversed in joy, and, last, in such deep sorrow; once more he ascended the well-known steps, once more stood in that room where he had last seen Mary. With what different feelings did he imagine himself to be now addressing her, with what gentle loving seriousness did he fancy her listening to his tale; he could almost hear her sigh of

compassion, as he related his father's fall; he could almost see the kindling of her eye, as he spoke of the noble manner in which he had redeemed himself; he almost believed that he could feel the tears, which his mother's sufferings would cause to flow. When, oh! when, would these delightful anticipations be realized?

A painful and unexpected cause for delay arose.

Edward had lost no time in communicating to his mother the result of the eventful conversation with his father. He did not touch upon his desire to return to England, and made no allusion to his future career, merely expressing his gratitude for the confidence reposed in him, and the love and respect which were only strengthened by what he had learned.

It was evident, however, that nothing need now prevent him from seeking his betrothed, and it was equally evident that this was the consummation to which his efforts and his wishes had always been directed.

Mrs. Hughes saw it. She was the first to propose his return to England, and she did so with a composure which relieved, while it astonished her son.

Mr. Hughes shook his head when Edward joyfully assured him of his mother's willingness that he should go.

"It was just so," he said, "that she parted with you as an infant."

Mr. Hughes's fears were well-founded. The effort was too great, and after a few days of uncomplaining and enforced cheerfulness, Mrs. Hughes became dangerously ill.

The friendly offices of Mrs. Anderson were solicited, and readily granted; where medical advice was scarce, and the services of female attendants difficult to secure, the kind help of such a neighbour became doubly valuable.

Mrs. Anderson had not been long in the house before the weakness of illness, and the wanderings of fever, enlightened her as to the cause of her patient's suffering.

"If you go," she said to Edward, "your mother's death will lie at your door."

What could Edward do, but promise to put off his departure for an indefinite period, and try to soothe his mother into forgetting that such a misfortune had ever been threatened.

Under this cheering hope, and the judicious nursing of her friend, Mrs. Hughes soon began to rally.

Edward rejoiced to see her regaining strength, but the consequences to him were not all desirable.

Mrs. Anderson's presence was much wanted at home, and as her duties as nurse became less urgent, the claims of her husband and children rose in importance. One morning, accordingly, the loud hearty voice of Mr. Anderson was heard at the door, announcing that he had brought Jessy to take her mother's place, as nothing at Warragong could possibly go on longer without her.

The change was by no means unwelcome

to Mrs. Hughes. Her son's feelings were very different; he had never felt at his ease with Jessy since his mother's hints respecting her, and, in spite of all that had passed, he was not sure that the wish which had suggested those hints was extinct.

This suspicion was strengthened, in the course of a few days, by the expression which he detected in her eye. as she followed Jessy's motions, or glanced from one to the other, as they assisted in raising her upon her couch, or placed her footstool and her easy chair.

Edward was the more annoyed, as he and Jessy were necessarily thrown much together, and, although not a coxcomb, he could not fail to perceive that the feelings with which she regarded him, were such as, unknown to herself, might possibly become serious.

His own heart was fenced with triple mail, and he was too loyal even to dream of danger, but he disliked the position in which he was placed, and he foresaw that his mother

was preparing for herself a fresh disappointment.

Had her son's affections been free, it is very possible that Mrs. Hughes's wishes might not have been so vain. Jessy, though wild and merry by nature, was the most willing and attentive of nurses, and showed a tact and judgment which her simplicity made the more attractive. There was something pretty, too, in the child-like pleasure with which she assumed the dignity of the charge which she executed with a woman's care; and to one who had never enjoyed a sister's companionship, her fearless sisterly frankness might not have been without its danger.

Perhaps Mrs. Hughes miscalculated the strength of Edward's attachment. It is at least certain that she retained the services of her young nurse, long after her health would have seemed to make them unnecessary, and that Jessy Anderson became at last completely one of the family.

Edward was one morning on the point of entering his mother's room when a light touch upon his arm arrested him, and Jessy with her finger upon her lips, drew him gently away to the verandah.

"Mrs. Hughes is asleep," she said, adding with mock dignity, "you are very disobedient. Have I not often forbidden you to go to your mother's room at this hour without asking my permission."

"I acknowledge my fault, but I looked for you in vain."

"Did you look for me? How odd! because I have been watching for you—I mean I have been watching lest you should wake Mrs. Hughes, ever since breakfast."

"How could I have missed you?"

"Oh, it must have been when I went out for some flowers. By the bye, there is one beautiful English rose which you must come and gather for your mother. I cannot reach it," and she darted down the steps into the garden.

Edward was obliged to follow, but his companion would not be contented with one rose. Laughing, singing, and full of glee, she flitted like a butterfly from flower to flower, till suddenly exclaiming "I must go to my post," she ran lightly back to the house, and reappeared in the verandah with the quickness of thought, saying that Mrs. Hughes was still asleep.

"You seem in great spirits to-day," said Edward, as he looked at her happy face, and marked her active movements as she now prepared to arrange the flowers.

The dejected tone in which he spoke caught Jessy's attention.

"And you are sad, dear Edward," she said, with ready sympathy; "but your mother is really better; and then, I have been grave so long."

"Yes, this is a sad life for you," answered Edward; "your own happy home is much fitter for you than this sad sick room."

"Oh no, no!" exclaimed Jessy, "I would

not go away for the world;" and then, as if to hide the real feeling with which she had spoken, she said, "You know you could not do without me. I am sure Mrs. Hughes cannot spare me yet."

"But she is really better?" asked Edward.

"Yes! better and stronger; though still easily agitated."

"Then you think that I may not yet speak of going away?"

"Going away!" exclaimed Jessy, and the flowers fell from her hand. "Are you going away?"

"Did you not know that it was, in some degree, the fear of my returning to England which brought on my mother's illness?"

Jessy did not look up. Her eyes were too full of tears, but she murmured half unconsciously,

"I do not wonder!"

"I am very, very anxious to go," continued Edward; "but it is terrible to see my mother so unhappy. I hoped that with

time she would reconcile herself to the thought."

"She never will," said Jessy, with sudden energy.

"My mother has then spoken to you on the subject?" asked Edward with surprise.

"No," answered Jessy, steadily, in spite of her blushes; "but it is impossible. You cannot know how she loves you, or you would never think of leaving her. Before you came she looked so melancholy! My mother used to say that it made her heart ache to see how Mrs. Hughes would gaze at us children on Sundays when we were here. We thought that all her children must have died. I am sure it is very wrong and undutiful of you to go. You are not half so good as I thought you."

Jessy spoke warmly. She was thinking only of Mrs. Hughes.

"Do not call me undutiful, Jessy; you do not know my difficulties."

"It is not like you, Edward, to talk of

difficulties in pleasing your mother. What can come before your duty to her? Think how ill and weak she has been. Dear, dear Edward," she said, coming up to him with the affectionate eagerness of a sister, "do not go. You will be so unhappy if you do. I would give anything in the world to make you stay—pray, stay—promise me that you will."

A sudden thought struck Edward.

"Shall I tell you, Jessy, what it is that makes me seem so hard-hearted?"

"Yes, but promise first."

"I will promise you that my mother shall be my first object. She cannot be the only one, Jessy, because, before I came here, before I had known my mother, I had known and loved one to whom I am engaged, to whom I am bound as much as if the sacred words of marriage had made us man and wife. It is to fulfil this engagement that I wish to return to England. Am I so entirely wrong? Do you condemn me now, dear Jessy?"

The young girl did not answer. Her first knowledge of love was from the terrible pang of jealousy which shot through her heart at Edward's words. She did not understand her own sensations; she had no time to analyze them; but the instinctive dignity of a woman came to her rescue, and taught her, young, unsophisticated, simple as she was, to suppress and conceal them. As if she had only sought time for consideration, she answered firmly,

"That alters the whole case, of course."

Edward was completely deceived.

"What advice do you give me, now that you are acquainted with the circumstances of my situation?" he asked.

It was perhaps fortunate for Jessy, that the faint voice of Mrs. Hughes was heard calling for her, so that the conversation ended before her self-possession had been too severely tried.

When at length the slow process of dressing the invalid, and moving her to

her easy chair was over, the young nurse made her escape, and taking refuge in her own room, locked the door, and then sat down and cried like a very child.

She was so disappointed, though she knew not of what, so sorry for Mrs. Hughes, so sorry for Edward, so sorry for herself; and yet—how foolish! she had not thought that he liked her better than anybody else, and therefore why should she be so unhappy? This person he was engaged to,—he must love her very much; and here the tears burst forth afresh; no doubt she was as superior to any other woman as he was to any other man, infinitely superior to herself at least, poor Jessy thought, and how miserable they must both have been! Now they might again be happy! Oh he must go! His mother could not have the heart to keep him. Why had he never mentioned all this before, and yet, why should he, unless he suspected—

Jessy blushed crimson as she sat there alone, her tears stopped, her eyes flashed, she stood up as if she would defy the world. What a child, what a foolish child she had been, but with proud pleasure she remembered that she had not betrayed herself. "It is not too late," she thought, "and I will die rather than let him discover my folly."

Jessy left her room with a firm step. There was an air of dignity in her slight girlish form, a reserve and steadiness even in her gaiety from that day forth. She seemed to have stepped at once from childhood to womanhood, but except in this no one could have detected a change in her manner. Kind and cordial it had always been to Edward, kind and cordial it continued, while he, now perfectly at his ease, became frank and confidential in his bearing towards her. He found, however, that it was not quite so easy to meet her alone now, as it had been when he avoided, rather than sought such *tête-à-têtes*.

Mrs. Hughes's health improved rapidly to a certain point, but after a few weeks it was impossible not to perceive that she had ceased to make any progress. Although no immediate danger was to be apprehended, recovery seemed to be out of the question. In this state, by care and absence of all excitement, she might linger on for years, while any sudden shock or agitating discussion might bring her instantly to the grave.

Edward and his father had many serious consultations upon the course which it was their duty to follow.

Mr. Hughes was nearly as anxious for his son's return to England, as Edward himself was, but both felt it to be out of the question. Edward would not leave his mother now, even for Mary. He could not bring himself to this decision, dutiful and affectionate as he was, without a struggle.

But a little while before he had seen his way so clearly, he had thought himself so

near the goal, and now this sad, this indefinite delay! It could end only by his mother's death. He could not therefore desire to see it shortened. What might not happen in the interval! Could even Mary's constancy bear such an ordeal?

What if her father's persuasions, the total absence of any sign of his existence, hope long deferred, and sickening for lack of nourishment; what if the inevitable consequences of separation should bear their usual fruit, and Mary's heart be alienated from him now, when nothing but his presence was required to make her his for ever! Fears which he had long refused to entertain preyed upon his mind, but his resolution was unchanged. He had adopted the principle expressed in the stout-hearted old French motto, "Fais ce que dois, advienne que pourra." He could not doubt what it was right to do; the consequences he must trust to Providence.

When he looked at his mother's pale

face, and saw it brighten at his approach, when he thought of all that she had suffered, and felt that it was his presence alone which threw a gleam of sunshine over her last days, he was ready to reproach himself for dwelling at all upon his own disappointment.

Mr. Hughes had suggested that Edward should write to Mary, but this he did not like to do. His letter might perhaps find her on the eve of marriage with another. Should he write to Mr. Marshall? No, he preferred doing nothing until he could do all. There was always the danger of provoking Mr. Hardy to issue some positive prohibition which he would be too proud to retract, and his daughter too dutiful to disobey. Edward would trust to no one's prudence but his own.

Thus passed the summer, and thus passed half the winter. Mr. Hughes and Edward were never absent from home long, and never both at once. Jessy's visits were

frequent, she was welcome to all. No allusion was made to Edward's leaving the country, and Mrs. Hughes was placid and cheerful. Her husband had always treated her with consideration, but of late, his conversations with Edward, and his improved tone of mind, had dispelled the gloom which so long destroyed the comfort of their domestic intercourse. Once more Mrs. Hughes enjoyed with him free communication of thought and feeling, while the fear which had gradually mingled with her love gave way, and she found herself, in spite of her illness, happier than she had ever been before.

Peace and composure checked but could not arrest the progress of disease. After a while she began again to sink, and this time there was nothing to help her to rally. She was the first to perceive that her life was drawing to a close, and great as had been her patience throughout, the fortitude with which she contemplated her

approaching end called forth the surprise and admiration of her husband and son. They were not prepared for the strength of mind exhibited in illness. While in health, the timidity of Mrs. Hughes had prevented her from doing justice to her understanding, and from acquiring an influence, which, at one time, might have been exerted most beneficially for the welfare of those she loved. But it is often thus; many who fear their fellow-creatures, do not fear death; it is for them difficult to act, easy to endure.

Mrs. Hughes had never found courage to act, except when prompted by her affections. It was under the same influence that she now roused herself for a last effort.

The fear that Edward would return to England was still strong upon her; she did not fear it now for herself, but for her husband; what would his existence be when deprived of wife and child! She

had succeeded in persuading herself that the marriage with Mary could never take place, and that for Edward's sake as well as his father's it would be better to cease to think of it. She had been misled by her son's ready abandonment of his project at the beginning of her illness, and she determined to lose no opportunity of securing what she had so dearly at heart.

Edward and Jessy were sitting by her one morning. She had spoken to them of her conviction that death was not far off, of her willingness to die. She thanked them both for their care and kindness, and Edward especially for the happiness of her last days.

"It is not only the happiness which you have given me that I thank you for, dearest Edward, the happiness of knowing that I do not leave your father desolate, is far greater. But for this I could not die in peace. Leaving you with him I need not cling to earth, you will watch over him

as you have watched over me, you will support and comfort him in his declining age, you will never leave him or forsake him."

Mrs. Hughes looked anxiously at her son who was kneeling by her bedside. He did not speak. She continued solemnly.

"I commit him to your charge. With my dying breath I bid you, Edward, never to desert him."

"I will never desert him, mother; I will never leave him except at his own bidding."

"That will not satisfy me, I must have your promise, your unconditional promise. Oh, my son, as you value your mother's last blessing, as you wish her peace upon her death-bed; promise that while your father lives you will not leave him!"

Edward was painfully agitated. Could he, ought he to refuse such an appeal, and yet by yielding, should he secure even his father's happiness. Confused, distracted, unable to distinguish clearly between his

duties, he knew not what he ought to do.

"Edward, you must not promise," said Jessy's low warning voice.

Mrs. Hughes did not hear the words, and she misinterpreted Edward's answering glance.

"I am sure that Jessy will help you," she said, "she will help you in your pious care, and she will reward you. My children both;" and taking a hand of each, before either knew what she was about to do, she joined them.

Jessy felt the involuntary start, the attempt that Edward made to release his own; a sudden blush overspread her face, like the light of a flickering flame, and as quickly died away. Although she knew Edward's feelings, there was a momentary pang at so marked an evidence of them, and a little anger may have aided the self-possession with which, withdrawing her hand, she said:—

"I will gladly do all for Mr. Hughes, as if he were my own father if he will let me, but do not press Edward, he has no right to promise. Though he has other duties, you may trust him never to let them interfere with his father's happiness."

"Yes, trust me, dearest mother, trust me; no vow can make his happiness more sacred to me than it is already; will you not trust me to pursue the course most certain to secure it?"

Mrs. Hughes looked from one to the other: she was not satisfied, but she saw that her darling scheme met with no encouragement on either side. With a sad heart she submitted.

"I must find what comfort I can in your assurances; perhaps you may be right, and yet, — I would fain have had your positive word."

"Dearest mother, have I been wanting in duty hitherto, that you so mistrust me?" asked Edward, reproachfully; "I do not feel that I deserve such words."

Mrs. Hughes was softened in a moment.

"Forgive me, Edward," she said, "the wife had made the mother unjust; I may, indeed, leave all to your own heart, and rest in peace."

"Thank you, mother; your trust is not misplaced. Such freedom binds me faster than a thousand oaths."

"God bless you, my son; I will not suffer myself to doubt again."

Edward pressed his lips upon the thin white hand held out to him, and the subject was never more touched upon between them.

He sought an opportunity of expressing to Jessy his gratitude for her timely aid, but in vain, none was ever permitted to him.

Mr. Hughes, on learning what had passed, declared, that had his son made the vow required, it would have destroyed the only hope which he now cherished with any degree of eagerness.

"I wish to live," he said, "until you and

your Mary are restored to one another. When I know that you are both too happy to remember all that has delayed your happiness, my work will be ended, my heart will be light, and I shall be ready to depart, and be at peace."

Mr. Hughes and Edward had hitherto avoided speaking of the future, depending as it did upon the death of one so dearly loved, they shrank from looking forward to it. Edward, especially, recoiled from the thought that his mother's death was to be the signal which should set him free to seek for love and happiness. Mr. Hughes, whose object was not his own but another's welfare, was able to look forward with somewhat less repugnance, and Edward's restoration to his country and his betrothed, became an absorbing passion which possessed him as completely as his feelings of remorse had formerly done.

Mrs. Hughes now sank rapidly. Every day she became weaker and weaker. Every

day her gentle voice became more gentle, her anxiety not to be a burden to others more marked; every day the devotion of her husband and son became more unremitting.

"Walter," she said, one evening, as they were both as usual at her bedside, Jessy having left them a few days before; her voice was scarcely audible, and her husband bent down to catch the words, "Walter, this was our wedding-day."

He had forgotten it. A cold shudder ran through him, as he felt that it was to be her last. The same thought was in both their minds, but neither spoke it. As Mr. Hughes looked at the faded form that lay before him, his memory ran swiftly over the years that had intervened since the day which bound him to love and to cherish her. Upon how few bright spots could he pause! What a joyless life had his wife's been! And he, he alone, had been the cause: he never felt so keenly as at this moment, how little he had done to

lighten the load of misery which he had brought upon her, and now he was powerless, the past could not be recalled, the future narrowed itself to a few hours.

"Oh, that I might live my life again," he murmured; "Lucy, Lucy, it was a fatal day for you."

"I have never repented it," she said, with sudden energy; then, falling back, she added with a faint smile, "and now that I have my boy again—"

"In that, at least, I acted for the best; the sacrifice was not yours alone, but I might have softened it to you, and after that, after the first irreparable wrong, to cast a heavier shadow over your life! to shut myself from you!"—

"I did not misunderstand you, Walter."

"To refuse to be comforted by you! And yet you did comfort me, it would have been some happiness to you even then to know how much."

"Thank you for those words, dearest."

"It would have been some happiness to you to know how fully, how deeply, how gratefully, I appreciated your silent true-hearted sympathy. Believe me, even when I have repelled your kind words, and have most sullenly shrunk into myself, I did full justice to your untiring devotion and self-sacrifice. I believe I should have been less unkind had I loved you less, I should not have felt my own unworthiness so bitterly."

"Do not let such thoughts grieve you, dearest Walter; had I suffered even more than you imagine, I should be repaid. My only real sorrow has been the sight of yours, and these last months have been so happy! I am in danger of growing too fond of life, just as it is leaving me. I have much, very much, to be thankful for," she added, feebly, as, exhausted by so long and agitating a conversation, she fell back almost fainting upon her pillow.

Her husband and son quitted the bed-side no more; though seemingly unconscious, the

least movement of theirs caused her to open her eyes and to look her entreaties that they should not leave her.

Through the long hours of the night sat father and son, silent and motionless; no sound broke the stillness but the ticking of the watch, and the faint breathing to which they listened with such painful attention. When the first pale light began to break through the closed shutters, and the sounds of wakening birds and beasts gave indication of the beginning of a new day, a slight movement startled the watchers. Edward bent over his mother. Her eyes were closed, but her lips moved,—the sounds were those of lulling an infant to sleep. He bent still lower, and caught the words, "My child, my boy, my little Edward," then all was still. The hand he took with trembling reverence, no longer returned his pressure, and he knew that his mother was dead.

Once again father and son knelt down, side by side, in solemn prayer.

CHAPTER IX.

Say thou not sadly "never," and "no more,"
But from thy lips banish those falsest words;
While life remains, that which was thine before
Again may be thine.

MRS. F. KEMBLE.

TIME, that pauses not for joy or grief, sped on at its accustomed pace.

The remains of Mrs. Hughes were consigned to the earth in a spot which she had herself marked out for her last resting-place. Things resumed their accustomed aspect, but father and son wandered sadly through the cheerless house, which no longer seemed to them a home.

It was true that they had been prepared for the sorrow which had now fallen upon them, but the loss was none the less for

having been foreseen. One of the commonest methods by which people seek to relieve their own sense of their friend's misfortunes, is by speaking as if long preparation served to diminish the sorrow, in proportion as it diminishes the shock with which the blow falls. They hope that the sufferer, who has long been laid aside from the active employments of life, leaves a less painful blank than one carried off from amid the full tide of business and enjoyment. It may be so, it must be so with mere acquaintances, and with distant friends, on whom the weaning power of absence has full sway, but where is the real mourner who has not felt the hollowness of such attempted comfort. The very inability of the sufferer to form one of the active circle, has made him the centre of another, the business, the pleasure, the very thoughts of which have depended solely upon him. And when the anxiety which has superseded every minor care is called forth no

more; the daily occupation ended, which has made it imperative to lay aside all active and engrossing employments, who will say that the very length of time such solicitude has endured, tends not to make more palpable the void, more chilling the recoil upon the heart, of feelings thus robbed of their long accustomed exercise?

Such was the case of Edward and his father. For many months every action of their life had been regulated with a view to Mrs. Hughes; they had now lost their guiding principle. Deprived as they were of society, any member of the small community would have been missed, as one of a ship's crew is missed; how much more one so tenderly loved, so endeared by a thousand ties!

It was long before Mr. Hughes could be induced to leave the house, though his health suffered from the unusual confinement. He had not the heart to look into his affairs, to give the necessary orders

upon subjects which required his attention. Edward, in spite of his own grief, was obliged to exert himself, and with the help of Ben, he contrived to acquit himself tolerably well.

The winter had been an unusually dry one, and as the summer drew on, there seemed every reason to apprehend one of those seasons of drought, which, recurring almost periodically, carry ruin and desolation through the length and breadth of the colony. It was necessary to use every precaution to economise the water, the cattle must be prevented from crowding into and filling up the water-holes, the number of stock must be diminished upon all runs not well provided with the precious element, sheep and oxen must be sold before the panic became so general as to render them unsalable.

There was much to be done, and Ben's experience was invaluable. Mr. Hughes was so fortunate as to possess many miles of

pasturage on both sides of the river which ran by his house, and he was therefore at present in little danger. The necessity for exertion, however, roused him from the apathy into which he had fallen.

One of the first evidences of returning energy, was the expression of his anxious desire that his son's return to England should be no longer delayed.

"Do not imagine that you will do wrong in leaving me," he said in answer to his son's words of regret, "you will only force me into active life again, and you will furnish me with an object of hope and interest to which my mind will turn with constant pleasure."

"Yet I cannot bear the thought of leaving you alone," said Edward, "in the day-time you may find occupation, but the long, long evenings."

Mr. Hughes sighed as his eyes turned towards the vacant chair which, for so many years had been occupied by his wife.

"The evenings will be long indeed," he said as if to himself, "but I cannot be happy while you are here, and if I am unhappy while you are away, I may at least hope that you are not so."

"The thought of your solitude, of your desolate old age, distracts me. I feel as if nothing could repay or justify me in leaving you."

"You have no choice, my son. You are so bound to your affianced wife that I almost doubt whether you did right in leaving her. I have no hesitation in saying that you would be guilty of a grievous wrong, in remaining absent from her one moment longer than you can avoid. Believing in her constancy as you do, what can ensure her happiness but your return. Let this point be never more discussed. I consider it as decided by your duty, my positive commands, and, in spite of your affectionate and filial regrets, by the dictates of your own heart."

Edward made no answer, and after a moment's pause Mr. Hughes resumed. "I have but one, I will not say request to make, but one wish to express. If upon arriving in England you should unfortunately find—"

Edward eagerly interrupted his father.

"Let me anticipate your wish. If anything should prevent the fulfilment of my engagement, I will instantly return and leave this land no more. Is that what you would say? and do you think that I needed you should ask it of me, father?"

"I will not suppose such a termination of your hopes possible. No, no. I shall soon hear of you in the full enjoyment of domestic happiness, and then—then I shall grieve that I may never witness it."

"Why not," exclaimed Edward eagerly. His father looked at him with an astonished and reproachful glance.

"Can you ask, Edward. Do you not know that I can never see England again."

"I know it, father, I did not mean that, but perhaps—why should not—it is possible—"

The gleam that shot across his father's face, almost frightened Edward, but it darkened, faded, died away; and putting his hands before his eyes, as if to shut out the vision which had dazzled them, Mr. Hughes said impressively, "Do not as you value my peace utter such words again. Agitation and suspense such as they suggest, would kill me. I can only live on in the dull stagnation of resigned hopelessness."

"It is wild to talk of the future," replied Edward, "and even now—good God! what may not have happened. Think of the time that has passed, the uncertainty of life, the effects of grief—of despair. If I arrive in England, hasten to the house and find her ill—dying—nay, perhaps at this moment." He paced the room in uncontrollable agitation; "You are right, you are right, father, I must go; this torturing suspense cannot be endured, no

certainty can be worse. I must go, and instantly. If my cup should be full, if she should be—no more—or no more for me, your broken-hearted son will return and devote to you the worthless remnant of his life. It is better for us both to contemplate no other possibility."

"You must not give way to such gloomy imaginings, Edward, it is not right; think too how cruelly you are depriving me of all that is to cheer me by-and-bye; it is the thought of your happiness that I am to live for. Leave me all the comfort that you can."

"I will struggle against the feeling: it does not often overpower me so completely. I do not doubt Mary, father, do not think that the chill foreboding which fills my soul, does her such injustice?"

"Trust yourself in the hands of Providence. Do not cease to hope, my son."

Edward could not for some time quiet his excited imagination. Now that no insuperable obstacle stood in his way, he

felt as if it were more impossible than ever, that the cup should not be dashed from his lip; he could not believe that he should positively see Mary again.

Mr. Hughes was determined that no time should be lost, and at his desire, Edward rode over to Warragong, to request that Mr. Anderson, who was shortly going to Sydney, would make enquiry about the sailing of a vessel for Edward.

Edward saw Jessy near the house, and dismounting he immediately joined her.

"Jessy," he said, "you promised that you would do all that you could for my father."

"Then you are going," she said in a slightly tremulous voice.

"You do not think me wrong, Jessy?"

"Oh! no, no."

"You yourself bade me not to promise, but if my father's wish had not been so strongly expressed—you do not think me wrong?" he repeated.

"No, I am sure that you are right," she said with decision.

"Thank you, dear Jessy, I am so divided in my opinions and wishes, and so afraid of being influenced by my feelings, that sometimes I do not know right from wrong. What a happiness it is to have a dear good sister like you, who can judge impartially. If you who are not interested in the case, except that I hope you will be a little sorry to wish me good-bye for ever, if you think me right, there can be no doubt." Edward might not be the only person, who fearing the influence of his feelings upon his judgment, was led to decide against himself; this did not occur to him however, and they proceeded together towards the house.

Edward's coming was always a source of jubilee to the young ones at Warragong, but when they learned that he was shortly to leave country, their lamentations became long and loud; Jessy said nothing, and looked so unmoved, that Edward a

little hurt, addressed himself entirely to those who were more demonstrative. Mr. Anderson and the elder lads were not at home, and he decided upon riding out to seek them, not very sorry to avoid the necessity of answering the numerous questions with which he was assailed as to the cause of his sudden resolution. He was surprised to find that Jessy had not communicated to any of her family the fact of his engagement, but he did not stay to wonder or to ask. Promising to see them all again before he sailed, he mounted his horse and left them.

The ride was a melancholy one. The long drought had reduced every stream that still deserved the name, to a mere thread, and though in the immediate vicinity of water a little verdure still remained, the general face of the country was burned to one uniform, brown, sapless tint. The parched earth was cracked by the heat, and distant objects assumed an indistinct

shape, from the quivering hot haze which seemed to rise from the ground.

Edward could hardly breathe, and his horse, by his distended nostrils and panting sides, showed how much he too suffered, when they faced the wind that blew from the north-west, scorching like a blast from the mouth of a furnace. By many of the waterholes which were now dry, a bare and trampled space, and ghastly dried-up bodies, afforded but too palpable evidence of the struggles of animals crowding to slake their thirst, and of the fate of those whose weakness prevented them from succeeding. Occasionally Edward came to a hollow where some water yet remained, muddy, unwholesome, but invaluable, and he would find it jealously guarded by men appointed for the purpose, who drove away without remorse the wandering herds, whose instinct led them from great distances, in search of the precious fluid upon which their existence depended.

It was at a place of this kind that Edward found Mr. Anderson. He was watching with dismay the gradual diminution of the supply afforded by a small but deep waterhole, to which his sheep were allowed to approach one by one that no drop might be wasted or trodden into mud.

"This is a sad sight, Ned," observed Mr. Anderson, his cheerful face wearing an unusually grave aspect, "how does your father's supply hold out?"

"We have fared better than our neighbours hitherto," answered Edward, "we sold much of our stock early, though at some sacrifice it is true, and we have a good deal of pasturage within a day's march of the river. The beasts are thin with so much travelling, but still they are alive."

"A month more will try even you," said Mr. Anderson, "as for me I must boil down my sheep while they are worth it. After

all, times are not so bad as they were, one is sure of something for the tallow. It won't do to be down-hearted. Come, I have done here, and we will ride back with you."

Edward's business was soon settled with Mr. Anderson, who was going to Sydney immediately, but again he had to undergo a severe cross-examination. It was difficult to account for having left England his engagement unfulfilled, for one who was unused to subterfuge, and yet might not tell the whole truth. He felt that he was for the second time laying himself open to unfavourable misconstruction, but he tried not to mind it.

A few weeks more, and the day of departure was fixed. Edward's passage was taken, his preparations complete, and nothing remained to be got through, but the painful process of taking leave of the friends he had made, of the home where he had first known a parent's love, of the father whom in all

probability he might never see again, of the spot endeared to him by his mother's memory and his mother's grave.

As the time drew on, Mr. Hughes seemed to become more cheerful, his son more depressed. Neither spoke much of the future, but they were, if possible, more inseparable than ever.

Another week, and the last day was come. Edward went early to take a final leave of the Andersons. Again and again he commended his father to their care, and their warm assurances brought comfort to his heart. Blessings were showered upon him, the children clung round his neck, Jessy alone stood apart and silent. Suddenly turning to her, he took her cold trembling hands in his, said, "Jessy, my father!" and was gone.

It was long before the dream of girlhood was forgotten.

Edward found his father waiting to conclude some business with him. He had

made the most liberal provision for his son, and had left every thing to him, with full liberty to dispose of it as he pleased. There had been some difficulties consequent upon the secresy required, but these were got over. One thing still galled Edward, it was the uncertainty what name to assume, the fact that the one to which alone he had a right, was still unknown to him, and could never be his. On this point his father was immovable, and he was fain to content himself as best he could, with retaining for the present the name of Hughes.

These last days and hours were much more painful to Edward than to Mr. Hughes. He could not free himself entirely from the fear that he was acting selfishly, and his mother's entreaties, together with the thought of his father's desolate old age, were constantly recurring to his mind. The half-formed idea of bringing Mary to help him to comfort his father in his last days, was

too vague and depended upon too many remote possibilities to afford him any consolation. There were moments too when he looked with utter despondency upon his prospects in England, and though these alternated with intervals of eager hope, he remained restless and unhappy. For him there was none of the excitement and exaltation of self-sacrifice. Mr. Hughes, on the other side, was giving up every thing for his son's sake, he felt that he was at length expiating the involuntary wrong done him, and like the martyrs of old, he accepted every pang with joy. There might be a shade of his former feelings in the satisfaction afforded him by his self-immolation.

He spared no effort to cheer Edward, he spoke sanguinely of his prospects, and dwelt upon the joy which their realization would bring him.

"In either way I must be a gainer," he would say, "either I shall have your happi-

ness to rejoice in, or your presence to console me."

Edward saw that his father had strung himself up to unusual exertion, and he feared the reaction that would follow, when he should be actually gone.

But the hours stole on; heavily, wearily, slowly, they passed, and yet the end seemed only too near.

He was to go very early the next morning accompanied by Ben, his father preferring to take leave of him at home rather than at Sydney.

As they sat together in silence, Edward's mind ran over all that had passed since his first coming. His reception in that room, his first sight of his mother, her tenderness, his father's coldness, the miserable hours which he had endured, longing for that which was now about to happen.

He thought of his mother's illness, of her patience, of her death; he had lost her, so lately found, and he was now looking his last

upon the father so lately known and appreciated. As an orphan he had lived in England, almost an orphan he was to return thither.

Mr. Hughes's eyes were fixed upon him wistfully, when he roused himself from his reverie; there was no mistaking the expression of that look. It said as plainly as the words which followed, "I shall see my son no more in this world."

Edward tried to remove the impression, but in vain.

"I shall see you no more, but it is to you, Edward, that I owe the hope that we may meet hereafter. When you look back upon this portion of your life, do not forget to thank God for enabling you to give such comfort.'

"I have sometimes thought that it would have been better for you had I never come."

"Do not say so, do not think so. What would your mother's last days have been without you. No, no, do not regret your having come upon our account, and God

grant that you may not long regret it on your own."

"I do not, father, and I never will, while I can believe that I have given you an hour's pleasure."

Both were unwilling to shorten the last evening, and yet they retired to rest earlier than usual. There are few in this world of partings, who have not experienced the dull cold pain of a last evening when all has been done, all said, and time alone remains to be got through. Those who love each other the best, are conscious of a feeling of relief when it is over.

Ben was ready next morning with the horses, almost before a hurried breakfast could be dispatched. He, too, felt instinctively, that to shorten the last hours would be a kindness.

Mr. Hughes still struggled to maintain his cheerfulness, but the hoarse and broken voice betrayed him. Edward was even more agitated.

"Give me your blessing, father," he said earnestly, "let me go forth shielded and strengthened by a father's blessing."

Mr. Hughes placed his hand upon his head.

"From my heart I bless thee, my son. May the God of heaven grant my prayers for your happiness, may He reward you for your duty, may He fulfil your desires and bring you to a happy home. May He guide you, guard you, and protect you, and may you walk in His ways for ever. The God of all mercies bless you, my son."

Edward's face was wet with tears as he sprang upon his horse; they were not all his own. Hastily dashing them away, he turned and waved his hand, and his last vision of his father was as he stood there in the early red light, shading his eyes that he might yet see his son; his long white hair lifted by the morning breeze, his tall attenuated form supported by the staff on which he leaned, with no one to support him,

no one to cheer him, no one to sympathize in his bereavement. Alone, alone, for ever more.

The words rung in Edward's ear, the sight smote him, as if a hand of ice had been laid upon his heart, and had withered the fresh hopes which germinated there.

Mary had perhaps never held so little sway over his thoughts as when reining in his horse upon the hill where he had first seen his father and his home, he looked back upon the scenes he was leaving perhaps for ever, and sadly resumed the road which was leading him to her.

CHAPTER X.

> Hope is a hermit's staff. Walk hence with that,
> And manage it against despairing thoughts.
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

WE will not dwell upon the journey to Sydney, upon Ben's attentive care and good wishes, upon the voyage and its details.

It was about the beginning of April that Edward again saw his native land: three years had elapsed since he left it. His anxiety became fearfully great as the moment for landing drew near; and only staying long enough at Liverpool to collect his baggage, he set off the same day that he left the ship, and rested not a moment till he reached the little town of X——, about fifteen miles from the scenes of his former life.

He had seldom passed through this town, and he trusted to the change made in his appearance by three years of an exposed life, and a hot climate, to secure him from the danger of recognition, even had any of his former acquaintances chanced to meet him. He was, in fact, much altered; his frame had thickened and developed itself by constant and severe exercise, he looked older, his complexion, formerly pale, was bronzed by the sun,—and he was still more effectually disguised by the beard and moustache which, allowed to grow in the bush fashion, had not yet been reduced within civilized limits.

Arrived at the small country inn, he inquired if Mr. Marshall still lived at his old residence, and being answered in the affirmative, he announced his intention of taking up his quarters where he was for the night, and hastily wrote a note to his old friend.

In this note, which was written in a feigned hand, he said that if Mr. Marshall still felt any interest in a young man who

had received from him great kindness, and had suddenly left the country three years since, he, Mr. Hughes, had it in his power to make some communications respecting him, and should have much pleasure in doing so if Mr. Marshall would come to the inn at X——. He begged, at the same time, that the substance of his letter might be mentioned to no one, for reasons which he would explain at the proposed interview.

This was the plan which Edward had formed during his voyage homewards; and, having summoned his hostess, he persuaded her to mount her youngest son upon a steady pony, and dispatch him to Holmdean, with the promise of a handsome reward if he brought back an answer.

How was Edward to get through the hours that must pass before the answer could arrive?

Fearful of betraying the secret which he felt to be written upon his face, he hardly dared even to make inquiries. He began,

however, by asking two or three trifling questions of a quick boy, who in white apron and striped linen jacket, officiated as waiter. At last, during one of the many visits made to his room, with mustard, salt, pickles, knives, or some other preparation, giving promise of a future dinner, he took courage to ask the boy, beginning with careful indifference a long way from his point:

"Is there much posting on this road?"

"Yes, sir; there's some, sir, to and from the railroad, sir," said the incipient waiter, as he deposited a plate of cut bread.

"Who have you had here lately?"

"Well, sir, Lord B— changed horses here last week, and Mr. Wilkins, and Captain Rutherford went by not very long ago; he always favours us when he wants a fly, and Mr. Robinson, and Sir John—"

"There was a family in this county once, I think, of the name of Hardy; do you know anything of them?"

"No, sir; never heard the name," and,

having flanked the bread with vinegar and pepper, the boy whisked a crumb off the table with his tumbled napkin, and was about to retire.

Edward stopped him.

"Captain Rutherford, you said. Where does he live?"

"I think they call the place Storrcliffe, sir. It is a long way from here."

Storrcliffe! What memories did that name awaken. The ride in that still summer twilight—the conversation, of which no word was forgotten—the thrill of joy that he had felt, when allowed to see that he was not thought inferior to the object of his jealous fear! It seemed as if all had passed only yesterday. But the warning shade of three long years arose, to blot out the hopeful visions that began to renew themselves with the vivid impressions of former days. His soul sickened to think of what might be hidden behind that shrouding veil.

To pass the weary hours, he sallied out for a long walk. It was early spring—the very season which, three years before, had seen his melancholy flight.

There was pleasure to one who had lately quitted the parched soil of Australia, in the soft air, fresh with recent showers—in the tender green of the young corn which sprinkled the rich brown furrows—in the grey haze that softened the distance—in the gleams that broke occasionally from the watery sky—even in the cool damp feeling of the earth on which he trod. It was all so thoroughly English. His old English thoughts and associations came back upon him; it was as if he gathered up at each step the scattered links of the chain so rudely broken asunder three years before, and he felt almost surprised at the change which had taken place in himself, while everything in nature remained so unaltered.

How often had he and Mary walked together in that fading light, yielding them-

selves to the influence of an hour whose solemn stillness raises the soul above the cares and passions of life — binding more closely the ties which drew each to the other, by the interchange of high and holy thought. It was on such an evening, too, that he had, for the first and last time, entered the doors of his own home. Edward's thoughts ranged wildly from the past to the present, from the present to the future.

"To-morrow, to-morrow!" he repeated to himself. "To-morrow, I must know something of my fate! But what if Mr. Marshall should not come? What more likely than that he should be too angry at my apparent ingratitude, to wish to hear of me again? He must have thought ill of me—everyone must. Mary cannot have hoped against hope. He will not come; or, if he does, it will be but to say that she, too, has discarded me. It would have been far better to remain with my poor father. It is folly to be so impatient to learn my doom!"

And yet he strode back to the inn, as if it was possible that his messenger should have returned.

The evening was drawing on, and still the boy did not make his appearance. The mother looked angrily at Edward, and wondered why people could not wait for the regular post, but must send other folk's children out so late at night; she did not know what might not happen to Jem, riding home in the dark.

Edward withdrew to his little chamber, which was now shut up, and smelt strongly of brandy and stale tobacco. There, by the light of a tallow-candle, he sat glancing over the pages of a three-weeks old county paper, pausing when his eye rested upon the familiar name of person or place, but taking in little of the substance even of the paragraphs he read.

At length the sound of horse's feet came clattering down the stony street, through the arched passage, into the yard. Edward's

heart beat. He calculated the time required for the boy to dismount, to answer a dozen questions, to take off his hat and coat; he allowed for the minutes required to find the little waiter—for him to seek his indispensable tray—and to have his lawful share of gossip. Still the note came not. Edward thought he had been too impatient. He went through the whole process again; but still no one came. He began to fear that there was no answer, and, ringing the bell, anxiously demanded of the unconscious waiter, who appeared with his never-failing apron and napkin, whether the messenger had returned and had brought any letter.

"Don't know, I am sure, sir; busy with another gent. Enquire directly."

And in five minutes more the boy reappeared, with a note.

"Left in the bar, sir. Hughes, Esq. All right, I suppose?"

The boy was out of the room before Ed-

ward could break the seal — his hands trembled so with eagerness. His eyes grew dim, as he saw the well-remembered writing of his old friend and benefactor, and read :—

"Mr. Marshall will do himself the honour of waiting upon Mr. Hughes, at the Angel Inn, X——, to-morrow morning, between twelve and one. Mr. M. will have much pleasure in receiving any tidings of his young friend."

His young friend! Little did Mr. Marshall think when he paused in the middle of his toilet, and pondered till he was late for dinner over the strange letter he had received, that the two last words of his formal note would convey so much meaning as they did. Little did he think as he sat that evening in his arm-chair, musing with a pleased excitement over the mystery which might now be on the point of solution, and answering his wife's remarks in such a vague manner that she looked up more than once to see if he was asleep; little did Mr. Marshall think

that he whom he loved so well, was sitting in the dark inn-chamber gazing upon the words "young friend" until the tears rose thick to his eyes, and his heart swelled with emotions of gratitude, and hope, and love.

The next morning broke upon pouring rain—not the sort of rain which comes down with violence and suggests the hope of a thunder-shower, and subsequent clearing up, but steady, unintermitting, hopeless.

Would Mr. Marshall keep his appointment? Edward looked into the little street at the soaked umbrellas that hurried along below his window—at the draggled petticoats that could not be kept out of the reach of splashes distributed by the clattering pattens—at the well packed-up little urchins who scarcely drawing their chins out of their comforters, were trooping to school with their bags of books, and seemed to think the rain hard enough to make school pleasanter than even paddling in a gutter with the happy ducks—at the carters, who, with

the resignation of despair, nestled down in the wet straw of their carts, and drawing a sack over their shoulders, left the horses to their own unassisted wisdom. All this was very English, too! but Edward's patriotism failed in extracting from it anything but a conviction, that there was not the remotest chance of Mr. Marshall's driving fifteen miles on such a day, even to receive tidings of his young friend.

Turning away from the window with a heavy sigh, he sat down and tried to begin a letter to his father.

Twelve o'clock sounded from the old church-tower, and the noise of wheels caused him, in spite of his hopelessness, to spring to the window. It was Mr. Marshall. There he sat in his old four-wheeled chaise, with the same sleek groom, the same stout bay horse that Edward knew so well: and in spite of the wet which streamed upon him from the dripping umbrellas, with the same kind benevolent countenance that always

spoke of peace and goodwill to all his fellow-creatures.

This unusual punctuality spoke volumes to one so intimately acquainted as Edward was with Mr. Marshall's habits. His first impulse was to rush down to meet him, but this would hardly have been prudent, and he controlled his impatience until steps were heard in the passage. The door was thrown open, and Mr. Marshall announced.

CHAPTER XI.

Let us be patient, these severe afflictions
  Not from the ground arise,
But often-times celestial benedictions
  Assume this dark disguise.

We see but dimly through the mists and vapours,
  Amid these earthly damps,
What seem to us but sad funereal tapers,
  May be Heaven's distant lamps.

LONGFELLOW.

"MR. HUGHES, I presume?" said Mr. Marshall formally.

Edward bowed, and brought forward a chair for his visitor.

"I am come, sir, in consequence of your note. I am extremely anxious for the communication which you have to make."

"Are you then still interested in that unhappy young man?"

The voice made Mr. Marshall start, his eyes were fixed with puzzled eagerness upon the bearded, foreign-looking face before him.

"Yes, Mr. Marshall," said Edward smiling, though his voice was husky with emotion. "It is I."

"Eh, what, who,—impossible,—yourself! Edward? It is indeed. My dear, dear boy, how happy you make me! I always said you would come back," and the warm-hearted old man embraced him with the affection of a father. "I don't know when I have been so happy; welcome, welcome back to us all."

"How kind you are to receive me thus after the manner in which I left you."

"Never mind, don't mention it. I knew it was all right, I felt quite sure of you."

"And have you never had misgivings?"

"Never, my dear boy, I knew you too well."

"Thank God I can justify your confi-

dence," answered Edward, "but I can never thank you enough for it. You shall soon hear all, but first, tell me,—you know what I would ask,—Mary?"

"She was well, quite well when last I heard of her."

"Has she left her home?" Edward asked, with a sudden tremor.

"Mr. Hardy has been living by the seaside for the last two years," answered Mr. Marshall.

"Mary has never doubted me," said Edward, in his proud confidence putting the question in the form of an assertion.

"Certainly not, up to the time when I last saw her."

There was something in Mr. Marshall's manner which made Edward uneasy.

"Is it long since you met?" he asked.

"Two years; as I told you, Mr. Hardy left this country two years ago."

It was evident that something remained untold. Edward felt almost faint as deter-

mined to know the worst at once, he demanded.

"Is Mary—married?"

"N—no, Edward, she is not married."

"For heaven's sake tell me what has happened. Do not torture me with suspense."

"Why, my dear young friend, you must hear it sooner or later, so it is better perhaps that you should know at once; but mind, it is only rumour—I don't answer for the truth, though it certainly came from Miss Jane, they do say—I don't half believe it, but they do say that Mary is engaged to Captain Rutherford."

Poor Edward! His head swam round; covering his face with his hands, he sat down quite unmanned, Never had he felt so stunned, so annihilated as now. Here then was the end of all; his hopes, his fears, his struggles between love and duty, his travels, toils, and sufferings had ended but in this. The earth seemed to sink from under his feet, he felt as if hurled into a

vast dim ocean of misery, without a star to guide his course, without a haven to steer for.

"You know this is only a report, Edward," said Mr. Marshall, kindly, "I dare say there is no truth in it: Miss Jane always wished for the marriage, and she may think this report a likely way to bring it about. Rutherford has been with them a great deal, but then the old man is so fond of him,—that proves nothing. Besides, now you are come back, you may take the field for yourself."

"Never, Mr. Marshall," said Edward, looking up for a moment; "if there is any foundation for this report, I will see Mary no more,—she shall never hear of me."

"Come, come, do not take it with so high a hand; very likely Mary may have listened to Captain Rutherford to please her father, though she prefers you all the time."

This was not said with Mr. Marshall's usual delicacy of feeling, but he wanted to

comfort Edward, and yet could not quite disbelieve the report. The words grated upon his hearer's ears.

"I shall hardly give her the trouble of deciding between us," he answered, haughtily.

Mr. Marshall thought it best to say no more, and turned the conversation by begging that Edward would now tell him the whole history of his flight, and subsequent career. Edward obeyed, stopping only when he came to his father's history, that he might again enjoin the most rigid secrecy. He had the satisfaction of seeing his eager and sympathizing listener much more disposed to admire than to condemn, and of hearing him exclaim at last:—

"Ashamed of your father, Edward! I should be proud of him; never was error so nobly redeemed. And your poor mother, to lose her so soon, and be forced to leave him alone! you have, indeed, gone through a great deal."

"And now I have only come back to find—" the words choked him.

"I cannot believe it. If all the world joined to declare that Mary had forgotten you, I would not believe it," said Mr. Marshall, positively; his feelings being so excited in Edward's cause, that they overcame his judgment: "it is simply impossible."

"Was she so firm at first?" asked Edward, catching at the gleam of hope.

"So firm! there was not a shadow of doubt upon her soul! It was the most beautiful thing to see her, nobly trusting, in spite of all they could say. Mr. Hardy and Miss Jane were furious: no suspicion was too bad for them to entertain, and Mary put them all from her with such dignity, such unshaken faith! I could have worshipped her, and I cannot trust myself to talk of her now, old as I am," said Mr. Marshall, rubbing his spectacles. "To think that I should have been such a fool as to believe the mischievous old maid's reports rather than trust that noble girl's constancy! I am ashamed of myself."

"Dear, dear Mary!" murmured Edward, his breast torn with conflicting emotions.

"Even that story of Jenny Fordyce," continued Mr. Marshall, "she never thought twice of it, and it was an awkward story, Edward. I do not believe there is a soul in this county that doubts the truth of it, except Mary and myself."

"Jenny Fordyce!" Edward had forgotten her very existence.

Mr. Marshall told him how every circumstance had conspired to fix suspicion upon him, and Edward was much affected by the assurance of Mary's steadfastness. He began to feel that there might be no truth in Miss Jane's story, and this seemed the more probable, as he remembered the hostility which she had always evinced towards him, from the first moment of their acquaintance.

"I must ascertain, as soon as possible, how much truth there is in this report," he said; "meanwhile, keep the secret of my return

even from your wife, Mr. Marshall. If Mary is indeed about to seek in a new connexion, the happiness she has ceased to hope for with me, no whisper of my existence shall agitate her, or cloud her peace. I am not so unreasonable as to be surprised, nor am I so ungrateful as to be angry. Time must do its work upon our affections as well as upon our bodily frames."

He spoke calmly, but it was with the calmness of highly-wrought feeling.

"I am glad to see you so philosophical," said Mr. Marshall, a little surprised; "how do you propose ascertaining what you desire to know?"

"I must ask your help. Have you any communication with Mr. Hardy?"

"But little. I have not told you yet how altered he is. Eight or nine months after you went away, he had an alarming seizure of a paralytic nature, and he has since then been in an irritable, almost childish state, that makes it difficult to deal with him. He

took a dislike to Allerton, and has lived at W— for the last two years. I fancy Mary has had a severe task to perform in nursing and soothing him. His passion is that she should marry Captain Rutherford, who is always with them, and whom he dotes upon. They say too that the mention of your name puts him in such a frenzy as to endanger his life."

"My prospect is equally dark, whichever way I look;—I wish the philosophy you praise was a more effectual ally," returned Edward, with a sad smile; "it seems that even should Mary wish it, her father would never consent to a renewal of our engagement."

"When he hears your story—"

"He would not believe it; remember, I have no proof but my simple word. Ignorant even of my father's name, how can I ever procure more? and by a man prejudiced as Mr. Hardy is, what weight will be attached to the bare assertion of—of a low-born ad-

venturer?" asked Edward, with some of the bitter indignation which he had felt on hearing similar words applied to him at his first interview with Mr. Hardy.

Mr. Marshall was silenced. The possibility of any one's doubting Edward's story had never occurred to him, but he consoled himself inwardly with the thought that Mr. Hardy's life was too precarious to make his opinion of much importance.

"If we can only get rid of this young puppy of an officer," said he to himself, "all will be well. It will, however, be prudent even then to avoid running any risk of raising a fresh impediment, by provoking Hardy to utter a prohibition that may be binding after his death. Upon every account Edward's return must be kept secret. If Mary is free," he continued, aloud, "depend upon it time and perseverance will do the rest; I have no fear. I will write this very evening to her herself, enquiring after her father, and mentioning the report. Her

answer will be at once decisive. You will remain at this place until you hear from me? And now I must go."

"You have told me nothing of Mrs. Marshall," said Edward, detaining him, "I am ashamed of not having asked before, for one so invariably kind to me."

"Oh, she is quite well, busy preparing for Anna's confinement; by-the-bye I have not told you that I rejoice in the dignity of grandpapa already!"

"Indeed, who did Miss Marshall marry?"

"A very poor young curate, you would not have expected that, Edward, eh? but he is an excellent young man, and they are very happy. I am obliged to help them a little, till he gets a living, you know."

Edward did not doubt it.

"And Arthur, sir?"

"Arthur is doing well at college; you must take the embargo off my tongue in his favour, as soon as you can. When I

named Mary and myself, as your only adherents, I should not have excepted him. He is as fond of you as ever. But good-bye, you shall hear of me in four days at the latest. God bless you, my boy."

Mr. Marshall did not forget his promise of writing to Mary, but before his letter was finished, he turned to play with his little grandchild, who was sitting in its mother's lap by the side of the table. The child was just at that age, when no pleasure is so engrossing, as that of throwing everything upon the floor, and seeing it picked up again. In the midst of a noisy game, the baby screaming with delight, and the grandpapa replacing books, paper-cutters, and candlesticks to be immediately thrown down again, Mr. Marshall was summoned away. Master Willy continued his sport, but Anna Maria was much too languid, and too full of her present delicate health to take her share in the amusement, and the child having soon cleared the space

before him, clambered up to look for fresh materials. To his infinite satisfaction, the heap of letters which Mr. Marshall had just sealed and directed, as well as the half-finished note to Mary, were now within reach, and were instantly scattered upon the floor; the ink-bottle seemed likely to follow, but Anna Maria exerted herself enough to pull the child back, and to call to her husband, "William, do come here."

Mr. William Morton, who was very studious, and had moreover already acquired the desirable habit of abstracting himself from domestic noises, made no answer. "William," was repeated in a fretful tone, until he looked up.

"Do just see what the baby has done! you must pick up these letters, for really I am not equal to the exertion."

Mr. Morton rose slowly, put a mark into his book, and laying it down proceeded to replace methodically one by one, the articles which strewed the floor.

"What number of letters were upon the table?" asked he.

"I am sure I do not know. How particular you are," said his wife, sinking back into her chair as if exhausted; "there, that will do. Fidgetting about worries me so."

Mr. Morton returned to his book, and was soon again absorbed in it.

When Mr. Marshall came back, he found his letter to Mary so blotted and torn, that it was necessary to rewrite it; this he did in great haste, as the servant was waiting with the post-bag. He was too goodnatured to be angry with his daughter or his grandson, but he was sufficiently disturbed and hurried, to make his letter shorter than he had intended it to be, and to put his leading question respecting the rumoured marriage, less cleverly than he had done in the first epistle.

When Mary received it, her father was very unwell, and she had no leisure for

writing. She was annoyed by the report, but supposing it too idle and too improbable a one, for Mr. Marshall to think twice about, it did not occur to her to undertake the disagreeable office of alluding to, and contradicting it; she therefore contented herself, with resolving to write to Mr. Marshall as soon as her father was better, and in the mean while she sent him a message through Miss Jane, who was answering some inquiries from Mrs. William Morton, regarding a servant.

Edward waited with tolerable patience for four days, even for five, but when the sixth and seventh passed without intelligence from Mr. Marshall, the confidence which his appreciation of Mary's character had revived gradually faded away.

He chafed, and fretted, and longed for action. It seemed to him that his doom was to be always waiting, and that he who had proudly hoped to be the architect of his own fortunes, was more the passive sport

of circumstances than ever man had been before. In his present uncertainty, he could not even lay before him a stern duty, and force himself to fulfil it. He could only resolve never to interfere with Mary's happiness, or to think of her reproachfully, and try to familiarize himself with the picture of her as the happy wife of another. Love, which made the first part of his task comparatively easy, in its anxiety to preserve unsullied the ideal so long worshipped, rendered the last well-nigh impossible.

At the end of a week Mr. Marshall reappeared, to announce that he had no letter from Mary, but that his daughter had received one from Miss Jane, in answer to an enquiry which she had made three days later than that on which his missive had been dispatched. Miss Jane's letter contained a message from Mary to Mr. Marshall respecting her father, which proved, he said, only too plainly that she had received his

letter, and did not like to answer it, knowing the pain which she should inflict by not being able to contradict the report alluded to. There was besides a passage in Miss Jane's letter, which Mr. Marshall showed to Edward, and which could be interpreted in one way only. In recommending a cook to Mrs. Morton, she said, "I am hardly prudent in telling you of this treasure as she may perhaps be wanted nearer home. You know our dearest Mary's brilliant prospects, and I am sure you will sympathize in the happiness they give her father and myself. The gentleman in question was always such a favourite of yours that I need say no more."

Edward would not show even to Mr. Marshall how much this intelligence affected him. He returned the letter without comment.

"I have two things to do before I leave this country," he said, "one you will think foolish, but you must help me in it. I do

not like to have an unnecessary stain upon my character, and it would be a satisfaction to me if the story of Jenny Fordyce was cleared up. You will, perhaps, find some clue to the truth, through a young man named Robert Murray, to whom I suspect she was attached. Will you do this for me?"

Mr. Marshall promised to use his best endeavours. "Can I help you in your second object, my poor boy?" he asked sadly.

"No. In that I shall need no assistance. Not even yours, my kind and untiring friend. I must see Mary. Do not start. I am not so mad or so wicked as to wish to speak to her. She shall not know that these eyes have once more rested on her. It is vain to argue with me. I anticipate all that you can say, but I am resolved. I will see her once more, and then I will return to my poor father. In time I may perhaps learn to feel that there are duties which may yet make existence valuable. I cannot think so now."

Mr. Marshall could not find words to argue against Edward's hopeless determination, he could not attempt to revive his former sanguine views, and he only said, "I shall see you again. You will not go till I have seen you again."

"No, I will not, and now my best and dearest friend, forgive me if I ask you to leave me. I need to be alone."

CHAPTER XII.

Live happy——
Should my shadow cross thy thoughts
Too sadly for their peace, so put it back
For calmer hour, in memory's darkest hold.

TENNYSON.

MR. MARSHALL was not the only person anxious to discover Jenny Fordyce's place of retreat. His enquiries had been anticipated by one whose researches were also fruitless, but whose object in making them was very different from his. This other person was Captain Rutherford.

It will be remembered that when Mr. Pringle first suggested the likelihood of an intrigue between Edward and the young girl, the idea was scouted by Captain Rutherford, who loudly maintained his friend's inno-

cence. By degrees, however, the constant repetition and universal acceptation of this mode of accounting for Edward's otherwise inexplicable flight, began to have their effect. Captain Rutherford's morality was by no means rigid, and he would have regarded the affair as of no consequence at all, had it not happened inconveniently with respect to the engagement with Miss Hardy. This certainly was unlucky, and the whole thing was unlike Edward, but after all one never knows what men may do, the wisest often get into scrapes, still waters run the deepest; and in short there must be some cause for a mysterious and sudden disappearance, and what but this could be suggested? Captain Rutherford ceased to be steadily incredulous; naturally volatile and inconstant, the subject did not occupy him long, and he was quite satisfied to remain undecided. His whole attention was moreover absorbed in the building which was now in hand at Storrcliffe. He had begun upon a scale of

magnificence which exhausted his father's liberality before many months were over, and he found himself suddenly stopped when his ideas were beginning to assume form and substance, and what had been done served only to raise a warmer impatience for what yet remained to do.

Captain Rutherford had remarkably good taste, and very great pleasure in exercising it, more especially upon all that related to the building and laying out of a place. His plans for Storrcliffe were really beautiful, and as he pored over them, or wandered round and round among heaps of mortar and ready dressed stones now lying idle for want of funds, picturing to himself the towers, the battlements, the terraces, into which they were to rise, the desire to work out his visions, and give reality to his dreams, assumed the intensity of a passion.

His sister came to see Storrcliffe; her admiration of the place, of its capabilities,

and of his plans, added fuel to the flame already burning.

"Dear Frank," she exclaimed, "what a pity it is that you should be stopped. It would be the most beautiful thing of its kind in England, and all your own taste, your own design. I wish I had some money to help you, but you will want so much. I see nothing for it but marrying a fortune. I will begin looking out for one directly."

Captain Rutherford laughed at this mode of extricating himself from his difficulties. He began, however, to see that if he should happen to like a person with money, marriage would cease to be so imprudent an act as he generally considered it.

Not very long after this, the admiration which he had always felt for Miss Hardy began to grow into a decided liking, and it was clear that a marriage with her would be any thing but imprudent, so he did not try to check the feeling. For a moment

certainly, he paused at the reflection that he was acting unfairly by his friend, but Captain Rutherford with many pleasant qualities, and some good ones, was essentially selfish, and selfish men are not slow to find good reasons for the resolutions which interest has led them to form. No sooner, therefore, had Captain Rutherford fixed his eyes upon Mary and her fortune, than his belief in Edward's innocence was at an end; and to make up to her by his love and attention for the neglect of one who had acted so basely, seemed the kindest, most natural and most praiseworthy thing in the world. To do Captain Rutherford justice, he would have loved Mary had she been penniless, though of course in that case he would have been under the painful necessity of avoiding her.

Mary treated him invariably with great kindness and consideration, but this he owed to her belief in his unshaken friendship for Edward. He had not ventured to hint

to her his change of opinion; but to Mr. Hardy and Miss Jane he had spoken openly, and they encouraged him to hope for ultimate success. It was by the advice of the latter, who warned him that his most certain chance lay in procuring such positive proofs of Edward's guilt as would force Mary to abandon her cherished trust in his truth and honour, that Captain Rutherford had again and again sought by every means he could devise, to trace out Jenny Fordyce, and obtain her evidence in confirmation of his own belief.

Meanwhile he had made himself so necessary to Mr. Hardy, who, querulous and irritable, was difficult to please, that Mary hailed his frequent visits with joy. He stayed with them often and long at W——. and as they had few other visitors, Miss Jane's hints and Mary's friendliness were scarcely needed to make the reports of an approaching marriage numerous, credible, and universally approved.

It was a mild spring evening, but in the small room of the cottage at W—— burned a hot fire. By it, in an easy chair sat Mr. Hardy, how changed in the space of three years! The bloodless cheek, the stony vacant eye, the helpless movements, the broken, almost childish murmurs into which a sentence begun with some energy would die away, above all, the painful unmeaning laugh which was often the only answer to an observation addressed to him, all spoke but too plainly the effects of a second and recent seizure. Mary was sitting by her father, answering in her quiet gentle voice the questions which succeeded each other without intermission, and often without variation. It was seldom that she failed to soothe him, uniting as she did judgment, tenderness, and the most untiring patience. To-night, however, he was unusually irritable.

"Where is Frank Rutherford?" he asked. "why does not he come and talk to

me. He has always something amusing to say?"

Thus summoned, Captain Rutherford, who, lately returned from an unsuccessful renewal of his search for Jenny Fordyce, was holding a long and whispered conference apart with Miss Jane, came forward, and though apparently much pre-occupied, exerted himself good-naturedly and effectually to cheer the fretful old man.

"Thank you, Frank," he said, "there is nobody like you. If you were always here, I think I should get well."

Soon, however, even Captain Rutherford failed; Mr. Hardy began to feel tired.

"Mary, where is my gruel. I want to go to bed. Ring the bell. No, help me up stairs first. I will have it there; if you ever thought of anything, you would have brought me some gruel half an hour ago."

Captain Rutherford and Mary assisted Mr. Hardy into his bed-room. He had since leaving Allerton refused to keep any

men-servants, from some vague idea that they did not suit with his altered establishment. Since his last attack he had been obliged to submit to the care of a regular nurse, but still he preferred the services of any one else.

"Good night, Frank," he said, "I do not know what I should do without you."

"And Miss Hardy, sir, I do not know what you would do without her."

"Ah, well, she is a good child," and as Mary stooped to kiss her father, he stroked her head with unusual affection.

Mary felt grateful to Captain Rutherford for having procured her this, now unfortunately rare, demonstration of tenderness; and it was with a sentiment of great good will towards him, that she returned to the sitting-room they had just left. Aunt Jane was no longer there.

Captain Rutherford was so completely one of the party, that Mary at once took up her book and began to read. He, how-

ever, moved about the small apartment with a restlessness that made her look up.

"If you find the room too hot, Captain Rutherford, pray open the window. It is a lovely night, and I should rather like it."

"It is very hot," he said, and opening the window he leaned out. "What a glorious night. The moon is shining so beautifully upon the sea. Do come and look."

Mary went to the window, the scene was indeed beautiful. There was no sound but of the waves as they rippled on the sandy beach, both sky and sea were dark and clear, and the moon was shining brightly on the water.

In Mary's mind everything sublime or exquisite in nature was associated with the thought of Edward. It was not that such scenes recalled him, that cannot be recalled which is never absent, but at these moments his image rose more vividly before her. She sighed unconsciously, as gazing far away

to the distant horizon, she marvelled what might be his fate, what at that instant his dwelling-place, what his memory of her. Her sigh was echoed, and she saw Captain Rutherford's eyes fixed upon her with an expression which suddenly recalled to her mind the report mentioned in Mr. Marshall's letter, and which she had totally forgotten. Withdrawing from the window, Mary returned to her book; he followed her.

"May I speak to you," he said, "for one moment?" then hesitating and uncertain, he paused. "Miss Hardy," he began again abruptly, "you have always welcomed me when I came here, you have always urged me to prolong my visits. You cannot have mistaken my motive in coming. Am I then too presumptuous in hoping that you will now listen to me favourably?"

"I have been most grateful to you, Captain Rutherford, for your kindness to my father. The hours that you have given up to his amusement—"

"Not to him, not to him," exclaimed Captain Rutherford impatiently, "you alone have been the object of my thoughts, if I exerted myself for him, it was but to please you. Do you not see, do you not know, that to win an approving look from you I would give up every hour of every day?"

"Captain Rutherford! this to me. You surprise me. Have you forgotten?"

"I have forgotten nothing, but it is impossible that your thoughts can still linger round one who has proved himself so unworthy of you. An unprincipled profligate!"

"It is false. You know that accusation to be false. You, his friend, were the first to say so!"

"I have seen reason to change my opinion."

"Mine is unchanged, Captain Rutherford."

"But only hear me."

"I will hear nothing, nothing from you now."

These words, and the manner in which they were spoken, stung Captain Rutherford to the quick. He felt the baseness of his conduct.

"Why, if these were your sentiments, have you suffered me to come?" he asked angrily. "I have been trifled with unjustly, wilfully misled."

"I thought you understood me," said Mary simply, and again Captain Rutherford winced, for he felt that he ought to have done so. "But perhaps I have been to blame. Believe me it was most unintentional on my part, and I regret deeply that I have caused you pain. Forgive me, Captain Rutherford," and she held out her hand to him.

"You are an angel," he said, "and I am a most contemptible scoundrel."

The sound of foot-steps was now heard on the stairs.

"I have one thing to ask," said Mary hurriedly. "Do not let my father know,

do not change your manner, it would kill him."

They had just time to resume their books, when Miss Jane came in, and casting stealthy glances first at one and then at the other, sat down in an agony of expectation.

"Pleasant companions truly," she said at last, when neither spoke, and there seemed no likelihood of catching Captain Rutherford's eye, "one has a lively time of it with you, especially when one's spirits want keeping up. There's my poor dear brother daily getting worse, and you think nothing of my feelings, but leave me to mope and fret till they get quite the better of me,—and there's the window open behind, just on purpose to give any one a crick in their neck."

Captain Rutherford rose, shut the window, and returned to his book, regardless of Miss Jane's coughs and gestures to attract his attention. This stratagem having failed, she looked at the clock and exclaimed,—

"Dear me, how late it is! Mary, you had much better go to bed. To-morrow is Sunday, you know, and the servants should get to bed early. Light the candles, Mr. Frank, if you will be so good."

Captain Rutherford did so. He gave one to Mary with a look that satisfied her she was understood now, and then turning to Miss Jane, he said—

"I shall stroll out and smoke my cigar, never mind me for I have the latch-key. Good night."

Before she could speak, he was gone, and thus doubly foiled Aunt Jane retired to bed in no placid frame of mind.

Captain Rutherford's cogitations were not pleasing. It was surprising how clearly he now saw the folly of his conduct. Here had he been wasting month after month, in humouring the fancies of a sick old man, submitting to the caprices of a captious old maid, losing his own self-respect by his mercenary motives, and engaged in a

vain effort to fix more indelibly a stain upon the character of his defenceless, perhaps innocent, friend—to what end? to find that she for whom he had done all this, had not even perceived that he was in love with her! That she should have bestowed so little thought upon him was more mortifying than all the rest; and Captain Rutherford puffed forth a huge volume of smoke as he thought of it.

Mary was so true that he never thought of doubting her word, or of making an attempt to change her determination, besides that now he saw his own motives stripped of their false colouring, he despised them thoroughly, and acknowledged that he had behaved ill towards Edward. Beneath the crust of selfishness, and notwithstanding a want of high principle, he had enough good feeling to condemn his own, and to admire Mary's conduct; had he been more in love he perhaps would have felt more anger, but as it was, he walked to and fro trying

in vain to smoke away a painful sense of humiliation.

As he at last returned home, he saw a tall dark figure standing motionless opposite the window of the cottage, where he and Mary had for a moment stood together. At the sound of his steps, the figure strode hastily away and was soon lost in the shadow of the wall which bounded on one side the road to W——.

When Mary on the following morning came down ready to go to Church, she found only Captain Rutherford in the drawing-room, and after waiting a few minutes, Aunt Jane called to them to go on as she was not quite ready, and they might be late. Miss Jane thought that she had been a little too impatient the evening before, and would give Captain Rutherford another opportunity.

Until this morning nothing would have seemed more natural than such a proceeding and even now, though feeling a little

shy, Mary mechanically obeyed. They walked slowly, the bell stopped, they entered the church and took their seats, still no Aunt Jane appeared.

Mary was annoyed, but after all few people knew her, and it could not really matter. In spite of these reflections, she felt her position awkward enough to make her look conscious, and any one who had heard the general rumour, would have found his suspicions strongly confirmed by her air of embarrassment.

There was one present, to whom the conviction came with a force that was almost overpowering. In the darkest corner of the gallery of the little church stood Edward. His eye had marked Mary on the instant of her entrance; the expression of her face was not lost upon him; he saw Captain Rutherford her sole companion, and a deadly faintness came over him. Thus then did he see her again. His Mary! for his he had deemed her, and he knew it now, in

spite of every argument. His Mary! unchanged in looks, paler, thinner perhaps, but with the same lovely countenance, the same pure and holy expression, the same open guileless brow. His Mary! and by her side a triumphant rival, an affianced husband! His breath came quick and short, he could hardly command himself sufficiently to escape observation. He had never suffered as at this moment. Imagination might have pictured such a scene to him, but what is imagination to the stern tangible misery of reality? Here was no room for doubt, no avenue for escape.

The congregation rose to sing. Mary's eyes were not upon her book; she glanced upwards to the gallery, and, for a moment, Edward felt that her gaze rested upon him. He trembled from head to foot. But she saw not what she looked at; her thoughts were far, far away, — far away from the present scene, and yet dwelling upon one who formed a part of it. Could he but have

known the fervent prayers that even then hovered upon her lips!

The service proceeded, and gradually the tumult in Edward's heart stilled itself. He could not withdraw his gaze; it was the last time that he should see her, and he was treasuring up and graving upon his heart every feature, every movement, every line even of her dress.

He fancied that she looked sad; doubtless her father's state of health made her anxious. Sorrow was then in store for her, and it would be the privilege of another to support her under it. With raging jealousy in his heart he looked at Captain Rutherford. Hatred and ill-will glowed in his bosom. Hatred towards one whom Mary loved? Ill-will towards one who could be only seeking to make her happy? He almost read reproach in that pale sad face of hers, and, sinking upon his knees, he cast the feeling from him.

Edward had not passed through the ordeal

of suffering in vain, and few prayers have ascended to the throne of grace, animated by a more holy spirit of forgiveness, Christian charity, and self-sacrifice, than those he put up that day, in the presence and in the behalf of him who had shut out for ever the sunshine from his life.

On returning home, Mary found the house in confusion, servants hurrying in every direction, Aunt Jane giving orders and counter-orders, crying, scolding, and doing less good than harm. Mr. Hardy had had another seizure; he was speechless—senseless. The doctor, who came immediately, shook his head; skill could avail nothing.

In four and twenty hours Mary was an orphan! Captain Rutherford did all that the kindest brother could have done, and then retired, making way for those who had a more legitimate claim to come to Mary's aid in her distress.

CHAPTER XIII.

Thus while inclement Winter's dreary reign
Shrouds in its drifting snows the joyless plain,
Within the bud secure the blossom forms,
By wild winds rocked and nurtured by rude storms,
Lapt in earth's bosom rests the golden ear,
And sleep the glories of the coming year,
Till whispering zephyrs blow, and genial suns appear.

ANON.

Two months had elapsed after the sad event recorded in the last chapter. Edward was not yet gone, why he could not exactly say, except that he had not succeeded in clearing his character, and he waited for the result of another attempt.

Mr. Marshall was in the town of H—, with many other magistrates, attending the assizes. A poaching case attracted a good deal of attention. The keepers at Storrcliffe

had had an affray with the leaders of a well-known gang, of whom two or three were now in prison. Among them was one named Rob Murray, and a note from Edward called Mr. Marshall's attention to the name as that of Will Fordyce's quondam friend.

At Mr. Pringle's house, to which he repaired upon receiving the note, Mr. Marshall encountered Captain Rutherford, who was engaged in the prosecution of the poachers. It was long since they had met, and, on Mr. Marshall's side, the salutation was cold and formal.

Before much conversation had passed, Mr. Pringle's clerk looked in to say that some one wished to speak with his master.

"Who is it?" demanded the lawyer.

"A young woman, sir."

"What does she want?"

"I believe an order to see one of the prisoners."

"I cannot give it her: tell her to go to Mr. Symonds."

"She wants to see yourself, sir," persisted the clerk; "she seems in sore distress."

"Very well; I'm coming. Excuse me, gentlemen, I will not be a moment." He came back almost instantly, saying, "No wonder my clerk was touched by such a pretty girl; she wants to see Rob Murray, who was so hurt in the scuffle."

"Who?" exclaimed Mr. Marshall: "stop her; is she gone? stop her; I'll run after her."

"My dear sir! without your hat? what is the matter? John—John! tell that young woman to step back here for a moment!"

The young woman soon came in. She was poorly but neatly dressed, and held by the hand a beautiful boy of three years old, who clung closely to her side.

"What is your name?" asked Mr. Marshall, eagerly.

The colour mounted to the girl's temples, her eyes sought the ground, as she answered:—

"Jane Murray."

"Then it is your husband you wish to see," said Mr. Marshall, a little disappointed.

She made a gesture of assent, but the lawyer's eye had marked the left hand, which smoothed down the child's curly hair,—there was no ring upon it.

"Come, come," he said, rather harshly, "we are too old birds to be caught by chaff; this won't do."

The girl looked up with a flash of pride and indignation, but it soon subsided into shame, and covering her face she cried bitterly.

Mr. Marshall went to her, and said, kindly:—

"Do not think that I ask from impertinent curiosity, my poor girl, but tell me—you do not know the importance of the question,—are not you, Jenny Fordyce?"

The considerate manner of Mr. Marshall made the poor girl sob afresh, but she did not deny his words.

"And this boy," he continued eagerly, "this boy is yours—his father—tell me, I implore, I conjure you, tell me the truth."

"He's poor Rob's," sobbed the girl, crimsoning with shame, but struggling to command herself, as with another touch of spirit, she added, "he promised to make me his wife, and I could have forced him to it, had I been minded."

Mr. Marshall looked round with a beaming triumphant countenance.

"There," he said, "you hear. Now who knew Edward Johnson best, and judged him most justly?"

Shame and joy struggled for mastery in Captain Rutherford's countenance. Mr. Pringle looked hardly satisfied.

"You knew Mr. Johnson?" he said to Jenny.

"Mr. Johnson? That was the young gentleman who helped to buy off Will when he 'listed. Surely I knew him. He was very good to us."

There was no mistaking the frank open manner in which this was spoken, contrasted with the feelings displayed at Rob Murray's name.

"Would you have any objection," continued Mr. Pringle in his business-like way, "to sign a paper declaring this child to be Robert Murray's, and not Mr. Johnson's?"

Poor Jenny's confusion was painful to see, but she answered resolutely.

"None, sir. I can have no objection to sign the truth, if it will na hurt poor Rob."

Reassured on this point, Jenny signed the paper presented to her, and then looking up innocently, she said,

"Mr. Johnson was very kind to us. I would like to know if this can do him any good."

"The greatest, the greatest," answered Mr. Marshall; "and I will do anything I can for you to show how grateful I am."

"Then get me leave to see Rob," said Jenny, imploringly. "I have not seen him

since—since this bairn was born; and I should not seek him now, but I heard he was in trouble and sick. I have travelled a weary way to nurse him, and let him see his bairn, and sore work I had to get away from the grandmother. Oh, sir, I would do anything to win to Robert."

"I will see Mr. Symonds instantly. Go and wait at the inn till I send to you. I will let you know the moment I get the order."

Mr. Marshall hurried down stairs. He did not know that Captain Rutherford followed, until he was half-way along the street.

The sight of him suddenly damped the old man's joy, for it recalled the uselessness, as far as Edward's fate was concerned, of the discovery which restored his fair fame.

"I must wish you joy, Mr. Marshall; I rejoice with you."

"I should not think you could care much," returned Mr. Marshall, with unusual harshness.

"I do, upon my honour," said Captain Rutherford, with warmth, and he added, generously, "I despise myself more than ever; but I can rejoice for Miss Hardy's sake, even though she has refused me."

"Refused you!" exclaimed Mr. Marshall, stopping in the middle of the street at the imminent risk of being run over, "refused you! say that again."

"It is not so gratifying a fact as to give me much pleasure in repeating it," said Captain Rutherford, trying to smile; "but it is true, nevertheless."

Mr. Marshall seized his hands, and almost dancing round him with joy, repeated,

"Refused you! Refused you! God bless her! How happy I am. Refused you! this is the happiest moment I have known for years. Refused you! Oh! my dear fellow, I congratulate you with all my heart."

"Thank you," replied Captain Rutherford, rather sulkily.

Mr. Marshall ran off, leaving him in mute

and not well-pleased astonishment, and exciting the surprise of all his brother magistrates who met him hurrying so strangely through the town.

In half an hour he was in a postchaise, rattling along the road to X—, not having however, forgotten the order for poor Jenny.

It is needless to dwell upon the interview between Edward and Mr. Marshall. The overwhelming surprise, the sudden revulsion of feeling, the deep joy of the former, may be left to the imagination.

The evening was too far advanced for Edward to begin his journey to W—; but Mr. Marshall promised to send a chaise at daybreak the next morning.

"And now," he said, "I must go home. May I tell my wife?"

Edward hesitated.

"Well, well, I will wait if I possibly can till I hear from you; but I do not promise; I am too happy to control myself."

"You shall do or say anything you please," answered Edward warmly; "do I not owe all to you?"

Mr. Marshall went to the door; then coming back with a face full of meaning,—

"Edward," he said, "there is one thing."

"What?" asked Edward a little alarmed.

Mr. Marshall tried not to smile as passing his hand round the lower part of his face, he said solemnly.

"Mary will not recognise you in that abominable foreign disguise."

"Oh! is that all," answered Edward, laughing; "set your mind at rest. I have no need for disguise now, and I will make myself look as English as I can."

"Yes, do. Look like your former self. Though I must say you are not a bad-looking fellow either way;" and with a friendly pat of his shoulder, Mr. Marshall again turned away. He put his head back again after he had left the room, to say, "of course you will write to me instantly. I shall not

be able to eat, drink, or sleep till I hear that everything is settled."

Edward was then left to his own happy thoughts, and it was long before he had exhausted them. His father's feelings of satisfaction were not forgotten.

Late on the following day Edward reached W—. Mary had remained there after her father's death, and was now quite alone; her relations had returned to their homes, and even Aunt Jane had left her for a short time.

Edward knew the house. Had he not seen her there already? He hurried thither the instant he alighted at W—, and soon reached the door. Standing thus upon the threshold of his fate, a thousand emotions crowding upon his mind, he hardly perceived at first, that a neat little maid in deep mourning had answered his knock, and was waiting to know what he wanted.

"Miss Hardy," was all he could say.

"She is out walking, sir," was the answer,

and the door was shutting, when he found words to beg that he might be admitted for a moment to write a note.

The girl hesitated.

"I am a very old friend," he said, "I will answer for Miss Hardy's approval," and he made his way into the drawing-room.

When there he felt positively giddy. The maid bustled about to get him paper and pens, and placed a chair for him in which he mechanically sat. But he could not write. Here, actually here, in her room, surrounded by her atmosphere! Oh! the joy was too great, he must be dreaming, he should awake presently and find himself far away. He looked round, he recognised her taste in every thing; he knew her arrangement of every table and chair; he had seen that piece of work grow under her fingers; he had helped her to choose that sofa for their own home. The very engravings upon the wall, were some which he had selected, they were framed as he had

said he liked engravings to be framed. The books that were lying on the table, they had often read together; he took them up, he touched everything on which he felt that her hand might have lately rested; he kissed the page on which her name was written.

As he remained thus drinking in long draughts of agitated happiness, his eye fell upon a beautiful vase of Bohemian glass, which was placed close to what was evidently Mary's usual seat. It was one that he had given her; how well he remembered the day, and that he had said playfully, "I expect this to be always full of flowers, even in mid-winter; whenever I see it empty I shall think myself neglected." The choicest and freshest that could be found now filled it. He was going to take one, when the little maid, who was suspicious of his manner and his protracted stay, came in to see what he was about.

"What beautiful flowers!" he said, trying

to conceal his agitation; "I wonder whether I may take one?"

"Oh no, sir, no!" exclaimed the girl, quite frightened, "not for the world; my mistress never lets any one touch that glass, she is so particular about it and fills it herself every day."

Edward forgot the note he had intended to write, and walked quickly out of the house. He went to the beach where he thought Mary would probably be, and paced along it wrapped in the most delicious reverie.

It had been a gloomy wet day, but the evening was clearing up, and a light breeze shook off the heavy drops which pearled every spray of the low bushes that he passed.

It was growing dark, but he walked on and on and did not meet her. At last he reached the end of the sands, and stood for a moment to look at the scene around him. On the high ground which barred his onward progress, some boys were setting

fire to the bushes, and as the flickering flame, conquering the moisture left by the shower, leaped up among the rocks, the heavy dun-coloured smoke rolled over the cliff across the pale cold sky, in which the moon was rising low and large, making a bright path-way across the heaving waters. It was very striking and beautiful, and he thought how in their long gone-by evening walks, he and Mary would have admired it, when he heard a light firm step, which made his heart stand still.

He turned, and there she was before him in the dim twilight, flushed by her quick walking and looking, he thought, as if days and not years had intervened since he last saw her.

"Mary!" but she did not hear, "Mary! do you not know me?"

A startled look, a low cry, and she was in his arms.

"You are come to redeem your pledge, oh I know it, Edward, by your voice!"

How much was asked, how much was answered, as they walked up and down within sound of the breaking waves! The little maid was getting very uneasy before they returned to Mary's house.

As they sat together in the evening, Mary said, "We have both grown older, Edward, but I doubt whether time has improved me as much as it has you."

It was true that sorrow and care had robbed Mary of some of the freshness of her youth, as Edward saw now that there was more light, but in his eyes any loss of beauty was more than redeemed by the touching and angelic expression which a trace of sadness could only heighten. She was perfect as she was. He could not allow that there was a possibility of greater loveliness, and as he once more gazed into the depths of those eyes, raised to his in the full overflowing of happiness, he whispered, "and you never doubted me, love, you never ceased to trust and hope?"

"Never, Edward. To trust you was never difficult, but it was sometimes hard to hope!"

The little maid looked very sleepy as she let Edward out, but her black eyes sparkled, nevertheless, beneath their heavy lids, with a half-suppressed smile of intelligence.

CHAPTER XIV.

Fire-side enjoyments, home-born happiness,
And all the comforts that the lowly roof,
Of undisturbed retirement and the hours
Of long uninterrupted evening, knows.

COWPER.

LITTLE more remains to be told.

Mr. Hardy's recent death made it necessary that the marriage should be delayed. Meanwhile, Edward and Mary were received into Mr. Marshall's hospitable house, and he and his good wife rejoiced in the daily sight of their happiness.

During this interval a letter came to Edward from his father. He put it into Mary's hand, and when she gave it him back, her eyes were full of tears.

"I have been thinking much of your

father, Edward," she said, "and I have a proposal to make to you, perhaps a startling one. He is the only person now living to whom we owe any duty. Would it not clearly be right that we should tend and cheer his declining years. I am sure you cannot be happy while you think of his forlorn and desolate existence."

Edward pressed her hand to his lips.

"What injustice I have done you in fearing to mention such a plan," he said; "have you really courage to propose it?"

"We have no ties in England," Mary answered simply.

"Have you no fears of the rough life, the want of society? You will see no one but me!"

"I am not afraid even of that," she answered with a smile, and after a few more conversations the whole affair was settled.

Edward on every account rejoiced. He liked the country, the climate, the life, he

should lead. He liked the thought of founding an estate and a family in a new land. He liked escaping from the indefinite position he must always hold in England, and much as he loved Mary, he liked better that she should live upon his estate, than he upon hers. Allerton, too, was an ugly uninteresting place, and he was sure that Mary would find in her Australian home, much more natural beauty, and much more capacity for improvement.

When to all these minor advantages was added the deep-seated satisfaction of fulfilling his mother's last request, of repaying the devoted love of his father, and of teaching him to forget in the peace of his old age, the storms of his youth, and the misery of his manhood, it is not surprising that Edward should have welcomed Mary's suggestion as the only thing wanting to complete his happiness. Her truth of character was so perfect, he was so sure that he saw into the transparent depths of her soul, that

he had no fear lest she should be secretly sacrificing herself to his wishes, and forcing herself to do what she thought right at the cost of her own home-feelings.

She, like himself, was without ties. Mr. Marshall and Mrs. Douglas were all that either had to care for, and both these kind friends approved and rejoiced in their intention, however unwilling they might be to part from them.

How full of joy was Edward's heart when he wrote the letter which would convey such tidings to his father, and bid him prepare to receive his son and his daughter within three months of its receipt. They sailed shortly after their wedding, and arrived without accident, at their distant home, which Mary found to surpass Edward's alternately glowing and cautious description.

It is a good old custom to dispose of all the personages of a story, and it is one that has been honoured by the observance of the great master of the craft, who did not dis-

dain to record the undignified termination even of Goose Gibbie's career. Thinking it better to err, if error there be, in such company, than to do right in that of others, we proceed to satisfy any curiosity that may exist respecting our former acquaintances.

Mr. Marshall—is it too much to hope that the kind old man has won some little good will? Mr. Marshall, happy in his own home, happy in the fulfilment of his long-cherished scheme, happy in the prosperity of Edward and Mary who wrote to him constantly, in his affectionate and spirited son, in his ever-increasing stock of grandchildren, glided peaceably down the stream of life, and lived to a goodly age, beloved, caressed, and honoured as he deserved.

Mr. and Mrs. Morton, thanks to him, struggled on, but Anna Maria never became an efficient clergyman's wife, while Mr. Morton's reading and abstracted habits were observed to increase under the influence of her conversation.

Aunt Jane, to the joy of every one in the county, gave up her house at Allerton, and removed to Edinburgh, where she drank tea, grumbled and gossiped to her heart's content.

Captain Rutherford married an heiress after all; her fortune completed Storrcliffe, and as she was a very quiet harmless personage, they lived together a life of average happiness, time and a larger sphere for the exercise of kind and unselfish qualities, tending to the correction of the faults in her husband's character. Jenny Fordyce and Rob Murray married the moment that the latter was liberated, and upon the old woman's death they also migrated to Australia, where Rob's sporting tastes and wild habits found a legitimate and useful field for exertion.

Many years had elapsed, when Edward found himself once more in England. He

had been obliged to leave his wife and family, and to come in person to transact some business connected with the sale of the Allerton property, which he was anxious to conclude now that he and Mary had decided, after due experience of their new home, upon never returning to England.

He brought with him his eldest boy, who was of an age to profit by the sight of a civilized country, and finding himself shortly before his final departure, in one of the prettiest parts of the West of England, and near the beautiful place of Mr. L— he determined to take his son to see it.

The old-fashioned house, the beautiful grounds, the terraces, the furniture, the pictures all struck the boy's young imagination, and he ran backwards and forwards exclaiming, admiring, and talking nearly as much as the garrulous old housekeeper who did the honours of the mansion. In one of the private apartments, young Henry suddenly called to his father, "Come here,

come here! here is a picture of Watty upon his pony, do look!"

Edward looked and was struck by the likeness to his second son, but by the side of the small painting hung another, which caused him to start.

"Oh," said the housekeeper, "that old gentleman is the late Lord R—, whose heir my mistress is. He was a fine looking gentleman, but he died broken-hearted after the loss of his only child, that boy."

"Did the boy die soon after this picture was painted?" asked young Henry.

"Oh no, sir, Master Walter grew up to be a man; I remember him quite well, and though he was proud and high, and got among bad companions, there was many a wet eye here when he and his wife and child were lost at sea. I shall never forget the night that the news came! My lord never held up his head after it. They say he and his son were on bad terms; the young man had married against his father's

will, and was in difficulties, I have heard, but I don't know. His death made my mistress the sole heir; she was his first cousin and had been his ward."

Edward could not doubt that it was his own father's history to which he listened.

There had been a day of jubilee at Maramatonga after Edward's return.

Mr. and Mrs. Anderson, their children, old and young, their grand-children, for Jessie too was married and was settled in the neighbourhood, that is to say, not more than a day's journey from them, all were assembled in friendly meeting. After the early dinner, they wandered forth in the garden and among the grounds, which had now been brought to a degree of beauty which surprised every new-comer, and which showed the effects of Mary's taste, and of the care and attention for so many years lavished upon them. The two elder boys, Henry and Walter, summoned their friends to come and look at a horse that they were

breaking for their sister, under the delighted eyes of Ben, who, though grown somewhat stiff, was still able to instruct them in all manly exercises. Gradually the whole party moved towards the meadow on the river's brink, Mr. Hughes himself, now old and very infirm, being coaxed along by his little favourite Lucy, who led him carefully by the hand, to see the beautiful young horse.

Edward and Mary stood apart. Their joy was almost too deep for the gaiety around them, and they looked on silently at the happy group. Edward had told Mary and her alone of the discovery he had made in England, and "Can you believe it, Mary," he said to her now, "I was foolish enough when I saw that noble old English home, with its air of ancient dignity, and thought that it might have been our Henry's—I was foolish enough to feel a pang of regret!"

Mary looked at her gallant boys as they came flying by, full of joy and health, upon

their favourite steeds. She looked at her little Lucy upon whose fair curls rested her old grandfather's withered hand; at the toddling wee thing that clung to her knee, and clapped her tiny hands as her brothers rode by. She thought of the peaceful, active life before them, free from great cares and great temptations, and her heart swelled with gratitude at her lot.

"Could we be happier than we are, dearest Edward?" was her only reply; and as Edward gazed upon that brow, calm and serene as ever, and invested with a holier charm from its now matronly dignity, and met the clear, trustful glance of those eyes which had lost none of their power over his heart, he said and felt that it would be impossible.

THE END.

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